Marxism Today

September 86 85p

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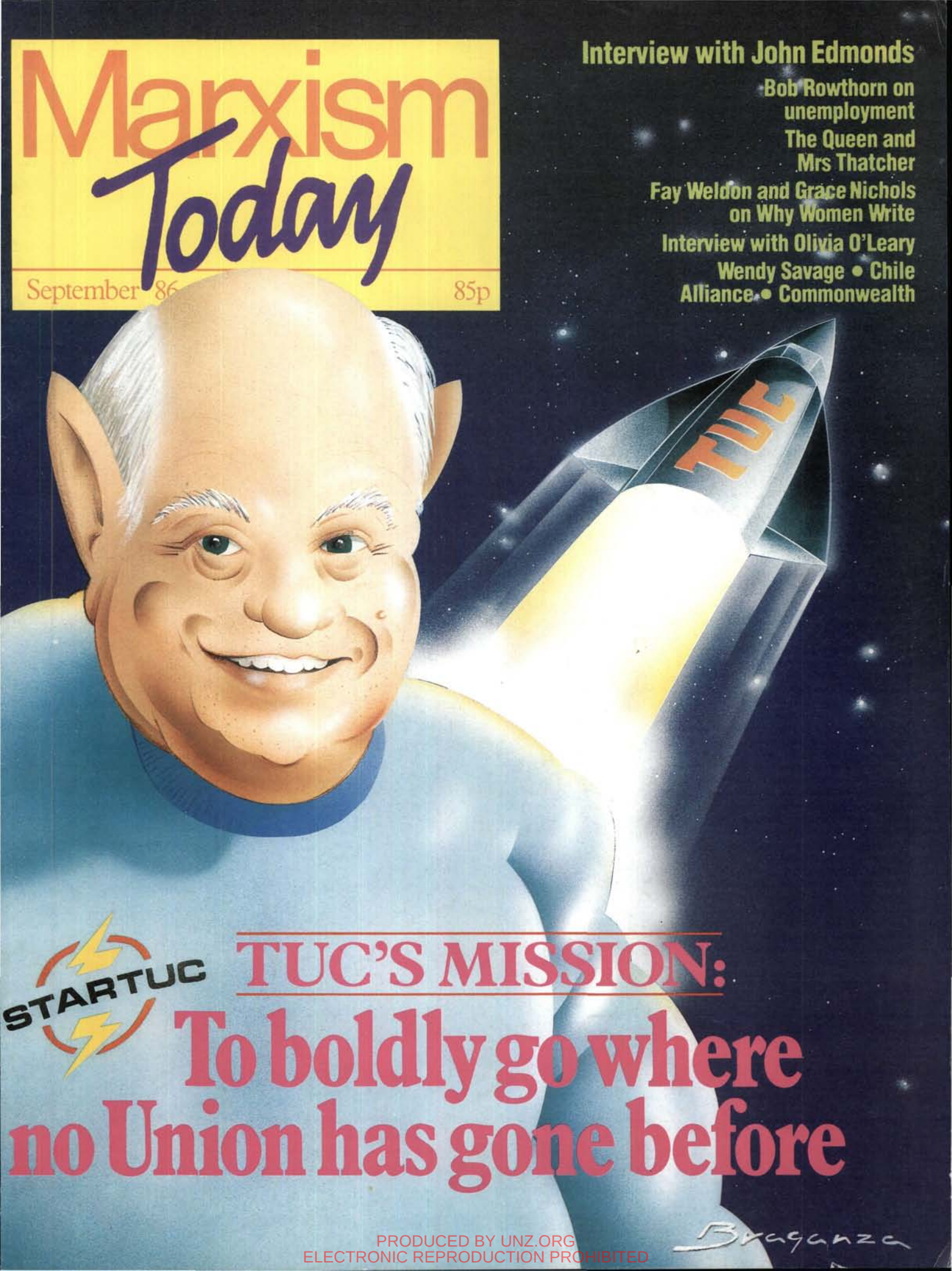
The Queen and Mrs Thatcher

Fay Weldon and Grace Nichols on Why Women Write

Interview with Olivia O'Leary

Wendy Savage • Chile Alliance • Commonwealth



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EDITORIAL OFFICE
16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY
Telephone 01-608 0265

EDITOR Martin Jacques

DEPUTY EDITOR Sally Townsend

FOCUS Jane Taylor, David Aaronovitch

LETTERS Paddy Farrington

VIEWPOINT Maria Loftus

CHANNEL 5 Sally Townsend

REVIEWS Sally Davison

UNIONSCENE Philippa Langton

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The two Davids: holding the balance has become the goal of the Alliance.

State of the Alliance

The Alliance parties – the Liberals and the Social Democrats – meet this month for their annual conferences in less bullish mood than 12 months ago, but still confident that they are on course to hold the balance of power at Westminster after the next general election.

Their hopes are well supported by evidence from the opinion polls and from recent electoral contests. In spite of a year which has produced some of the worst (as well as best) Alliance by-election performances, and in which it has been rocked by internal dissension over defence policy, the Alliance is still recording consistently better poll figures in 1986 than in 1985.

The May 1986 local elections – widely regarded as the most authoritative test of opinion this side of the general election – gave them 27% of the votes nationwide, enough to allow them to hold the parliamentary balance. The spectacular ousting of the Tories at Ryedale, matched by close second places to the Tories at West Derbyshire and to Labour at Newcastle-under-Lyme, showed them to be potential winners of any by-election in the land (including perhaps the next one, due in the autumn at Knowsley North). Yet in spite of everything, the Alliance is still very much the third party in British politics.

The delusions of outright – mould shattering – victory have given way to a more modest goal, that of holding the balance. That aim has been realised in local government in several counties during 1985 and 1986. It is now also the most that Alliance leaders are hoping for at the national level.

Optimists still argue that the Alliance can count on gaining support during a general election campaign and that this factor means they are within realistic reach of the 35% level at which they can think in terms of hundreds of Westminster gains. But realists are looking for much more localised electoral success next time – in north east Scotland, the southern suburbs of London and, perhaps, the west country.

The three immediate tasks facing the Alliance parties at their conferences are: to resolve the damaging row over defence policy; to settle the continuing uncertainty about union between the two parties; and to get the parties on a general election footing.

On one level, each of these tasks seems manageable. The defence dispute (in which the SDP leader David Owen is insisting on a pledge to replace Polaris when it becomes obsolete, and SDP president Shirley Williams, backed by influential Social Democrats and by most Liberals, prefers to leave the issue open) is primarily an internal SDP issue rather than a wedge between the two parties. A combination of tough conference management and political self-interest have already reduced much of the tension which defence caused earlier this summer.

The union of the two parties is being similarly resolved in practice. At grassroots level, Liberals and Social Democrats now more commonly operate as one party than as two. The parties field joint candidates for local and parliamentary elections. They fight on a joint manifesto. They will shortly announce the formation of a joint Alliance 'shadow cabinet', chosen from both parties and including non-parliamentarians as well as MPs. Liberal leader David Steel has made clear his preference for the process to go further, involving formal union between the parties after – not before – the election.

At a deeper level, however, the problems are far from resolution. There is a fundamental unease between Dr Owen and his allies in the SDP on the one hand, and the Williams camp, plus most Liberals (including, ultimately, David Steel) on the other. This unease has been caused by the need for the Alliance to move beyond the highly successful, but essentially negative 'plague on both your houses' approach and to polish a more positive identity to put before the electorate.

As soon as this process started, the tensions grew – on defence, on merger, on style, on who should be leader; and above all on whether the Alliance should emphasise the managerial attractions of the SDP or the more traditional individualism of most Liberals. All these issues come together in the very real differences which exist between Owen and the other senior figures in the Alliance.

As long as Owen remains so determined to keep the Liberals and their ideas at such arm's length, these differences seem certain to continue. Relations at the top have probably never been worse. But that does not mean that the Alliance is heading for destruction. It is not. At the grassroots of the Alliance they do not love David Owen. But they still reckon they need him.

Martin Kettle

Impossible choices

The death in July of Rodrigo Rojas Denegri, a young Chilean exile resident in the USA, after being doused with petrol and set alight by members of the Chilean armed forces, highlighted the brutality of the response of the Pinochet government to demands for the restoration of democracy.

The burning of Rojas and that of a young Chilean girl occurred during the start of a two-day national strike on July 2 and 3 called by the Assembly of Civilian Organisations, a broad-based grouping of almost all the Chilean trade unions, professional, neighbourhood and student organisations. The strike, the first since that of October 1984 which had led to a savage clamp-down by Pinochet, was a partial success. But as with the 1984 strike the country was not sufficiently para-

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lysed to halt Pinochet's plan to hold a plebiscite in 1989 which could give him another eight years in power.

The death of Rojas led to unusually strong denunciations by the US state department. It is clear that Pinochet, along with Stroessner of Paraguay, the last of the dictators in Latin America, has become an embarrassment to the USA. And when the US ambassador in Chile, Harry Barnes, who has become increasingly vociferous in his denunciations of the Pinochet regime, was tear-gassed as he attended the funeral of Rojas, there were even demands for sanctions against Pinochet. But the USA, which has successfuly dumped Marcos and Duvalier, still feels that the time is not right for forceful measures against Pinochet.

People take to the streets for the funeral of Chilean exile Rodrigo Rojas Denegri who was doused with petrol and set alight by members of the Chilean armed forces.

The 1973 coup against the Popular Unity government of Allende had as one of its main objectives the removal of the 'marxist cancer' in Chilean society. But the emergence of a mass opposition on the streets of Chile from April 1983 onwards, quickly showed that the Chilean Communist party (CP) at least had survived the fierce repression and had avoided the splits that seem to have occurred in nearly all communist parties in opposition and which split the Socialist party, the other main party of the Chilean working class.

The largest opposition party in Chile, the Christian Democrat party, has consistently tried to exclude the Communist party from formal participation in the opposition groupings, first with the formation of the Democratic Alliance in 1983 and then with the 'national agreement for the transition to a full democracy' in 1985. In response the Communist party formed the Democratic Popular Movement (MDP) with their former ultra-left opponents, the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), and sections of the Socialist party.

At the level of the political parties the Chilean opposition remains divided over strategy and tactics. The national agreement which includes sections of the Right embodies a fairly conservative economic and social programme which is to be given constitutional guarantees. In addition it accepts that Pinochet could stay until 1989 with reduced powers, and that any changes thereafter would leave the armed forces intact.

The Agreement in practice envisages limited mobilisations to put pressure on the armed forces for a reasonable and peaceful negotiation. The MDP wants a more radical programme with a full investigation of human rights abuses and a reform of the armed forces. It also wants mass and increasingly radicalised mobilisations to force Pinochet's defeat. In pursuit of these aims the MDP does not condemn armed struggle, unlike the national agreement: indeed in an historic break with their past history, the CP in 1980 formed the Manuel Rodriguez Front, an armed organisation of about 1,000 members 'to enlarge the fighting capacity of the masses'.

The problem with both projects is that neither seems to have the possibility of short-term success. Pinochet has made clear that he has no intention of negotiating his removal. He maintains tight control over the armed forces, removing any potential dissidents whenever required, and he still has fairly sizeable civilian support based on the appeal of 'Pinochet or chaos'. So as long as the army officers stick with Pinochet there seems little chance of the national agreement achieving its negotiated settlement. And although the CP is growing, as shown by recent student and trade union elections, the MDP, even when operating with the centre as in the civilian assembly, lacks sufficient forces to achieve that mixture of neighbourhood rebellions, prolonged and widespread strikes, and selective military action which it believes is required to force the military to ditch Pinochet and withdraw.

It is likely that Pinochet will go through to 1989, unless assassinated. It is also likely that the struggle to remove him will intensify and polarisation will increase. The almost monthly protests since April of 1983 have left behind them a toll of dead, wounded, internally exiled, imprisoned and tortured, particularly among the youth, that parallels South Africa. And all this creates a dilemma for the USA. US officials are now fond of claiming that Pinochet is the CP's best ally. But they do not seem to know how to remove him and ensure a stable conservative regime.

Philip O'Brien

photo: Andes Press Agency

After police tried to seize the coffin demonstrations broke out.

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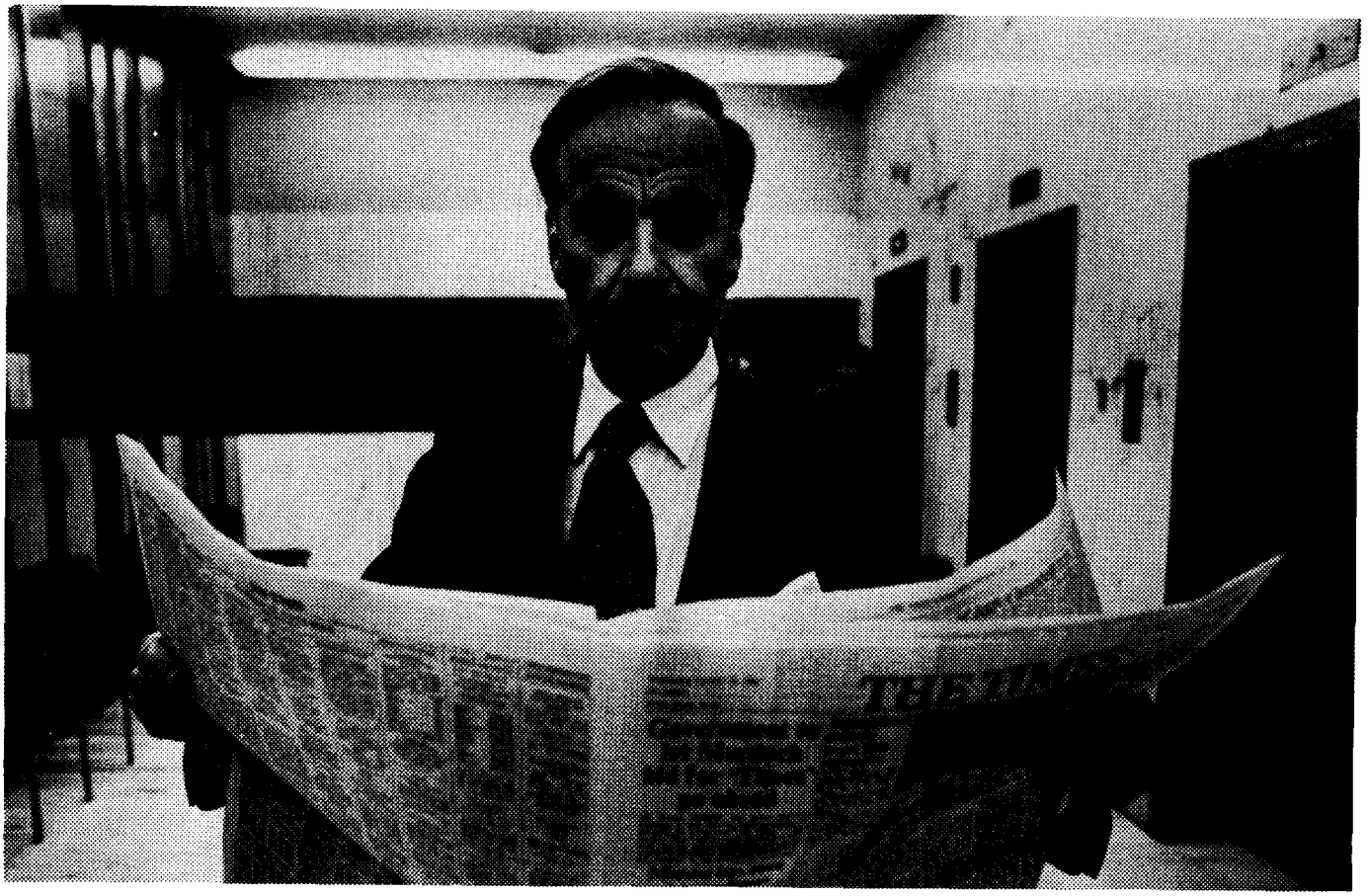

The truth?

He couldn't give a XXXX

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photo: Associated Press

The Commonwealth mini-summit: Canada's Brian Mulroney (left), India's Rajiv Gandhi (rear), Margaret Thatcher, Australia's Bob Hawke and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe.

Upsetting the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth mini-summit at the beginning of August has turned out to be a milestone in more than one sense. Its most obvious achievement was that the British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, was forced into an implicit admission that the South African government is impervious to any form of reasoned argument over apartheid, even when presented by a British government which has run the risk of being labelled as racist because of its anxiety to avoid the use of sanctions.

Even the prime minister who, one suspects, was always the real architect of the anti-sanctions policy, has now had to accept, albeit with immense and embarrassed reluctance, that economic sanctions are now inevitable. Her last ditch stand over the actual sanctions to be applied and whether they should be voluntary or mandatory has done little to dignify the government's earlier scepticism over their effectiveness. Indeed, her obduracy has contributed more to the hostility and suspicion of African commonwealth leaders over British intentions than any other single factor.

At the same time, the mini-summit symbolised what has now become an irresistible change in the nature of the Commonwealth itself. The tensions revealed amongst its members by the South Africa issue have also shown that Britain no longer dominates the organisation as it did in the past. The formal structure of the Commonwealth, with the Queen at its head and the British prime minister by tradition and common consent the first among equals, now no longer corresponds to the political reality.

The change that has come about is a reflection of far more profound changes amongst Commonwealth states in the 40 years that have elapsed since the British empire began to fall apart with the end of the raj. Economic development and the sovereign exercise of political decision has undermined the original assumptions of tutelage on which the Commonwealth ideal was based.

India has made major strides towards agricultural self-sufficiency, while also carving out a role as a significant industrial power. Nigeria, after the bruising experience of the civil war and the Biafra secession, has enjoyed the dubious benefits of becoming an oil exporter, while its political system has foundered over sectarian and tribal tensions. Yet, even with the memory of repeated army interventions into political life, Nigeria is a dominant element within sub-Saharan African politics.

Even more striking has been the growth in influence of the front-line states, with Zambia and Zimbabwe at their head. The Caribbean, in the wake of the radicalism of Michael Manley in Jamaica and Maurice Bishop with the New Jewel movement in Grenada, is faced with the pro-Reaganite conservatism of Eugenia Charles in Dominica and Edward Seaga in Jamaica. In short, commonwealth states, particularly in the New Commonwealth, no longer need, nor will tolerate British patronage.

The tone is now increasingly set by those states in the New Commonwealth which are prepared to adopt more radical stances over international issues. It was Rajiv Gandhi who appealed to the British population over the head of its government for support on the sanctions issue and it was Robert Mugabe who led the front-line states in their determination to follow a separate path over sanctions against South Africa.

Indeed, it was the issue of Zimbabwean independence which first underlined Britain's changed role in the Commonwealth. Although Mrs Thatcher now likes to lay claim to the Lancaster House settlement as one of her early foreign policy triumphs, it was, in reality, her first defeat. Bishop Muzorewa was supposed to be the British protegé in an 'evolutionary' settlement in Salisbury. Lord Carrington, however, realised the inherent unreality of that solution and dragged an unwilling prime minister into accepting the radical alternative. Even if Mrs Thatcher has forgotten, Robert Mugabe has not.

In the wake of the Marlborough House conference it has become clear that the future Commonwealth is going to be a very different creature from the past. In place of the cosy formula of a family of nations, it will become a forum in which the harsh conflict of interests between the developed and developing world will be argued out in a context similar to that of the UN but without the inhibiting menace of a US or European veto. It is that function that will ensure its survival, together with its facilities for cultural, economic and technological exchange, for Britain has no overriding position to defend, and the new *de facto* leaders – India, Nigeria and Zimbabwe – have learned that under the Conservative party at least, Britain has little interest in their priorities.

The issue of direct economic interest, in terms of British dominance in trading patterns, has been settled to Britain's disadvantage long ago. Britain leads in exports only to Nigeria (where it supplied 21% of the import total in 1983), and to Zambia. However, both countries exported elsewhere. With India, in 1983 Britain came behind the USSR, Saudi Arabia, the USA and Japan, supplying only 6.2% of India's imports and taking only 5.2% of exports. With Zimbabwe, Britain came behind South Africa, supplying 11.5% of the country's imports and taking the same percentage in exports. There are always other sources for imports and it is clear that Britain does little, unlike other ex-colonial powers such as France, to encourage trade ties over exports.

The Commonwealth is, thus, primarily a diplomatic institution in which, now, Britain can only anticipate playing a role similar to its other members, where status will come from

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cooperation, not from traditional prestige. It will be interesting to see how a future Labour government comes to terms with this new reduced international stature. Past experience has suggested that Labour, too, has assumed Britain's special status of 'first amongst equals' and a future where this no longer applies may be more difficult to digest than Labour politicians might think.

George Joffe

Exam nerves

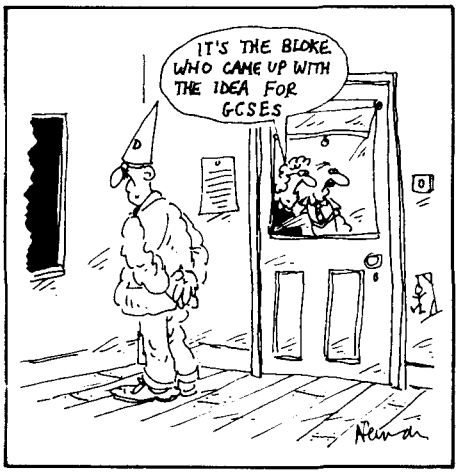
The first General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses will start in schools this month, as the government has been insisting they would all this year, even while schools were firmly in the grip of industrial action. Even the unions had tacitly recognised this as a *fait accompli* by the summer term, and waited only for the concession by the new education minister, Kenneth Baker, of an extra £20m for books and equipment to drop their opposition.

They had not basically changed their view that more time was needed to prepare for the very radical change from the old General Certificate of Education (GCE) and Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) system. But their teacher members were voting with their feet and pressing them to drop the ban on cooperations. The old GCE and CSE examining committees had been disbanded and new GCSE groups formed. Although preparations were behind schedule, they were fast approaching the point where it would be impossible to turn back.

If the exam was inevitable, if there would be no other exam to prepare pupils for in two years' time – 1988 – then teachers did not want to be left standing in front of the class in the autumn term totally unprepared. The GCSE involves changes not only in the marking system but in teaching methods, and of course in syllabus content.

In those schools that had been lucky enough to receive syllabuses, teachers, and in particular department heads, were quietly taking them home to study. Although they did not want to undermine the action by publicly taking on extra duties other than classroom teaching, they equally did not want to let down their new fourth form pupils 'come the autumn term' by being unable to prepare them for the GCSE.

Ironically, it was the teachers' unions that pressed for this exam in the first place and government which dragged its feet. They did not oppose the necessary retraining in principle. They refused to cooperate with it because they saw it as yet another demand on their time and skill for a salary that even the government admitted was too low.



Even now there must be many teachers who wonder quite how they are going to manage this month. Not only is the GCSE to be marked radically differently from GCE and CSE, but it is to be taught differently as well, with much greater participation from pupils in the learning process.

There is to be more emphasis on fieldwork in subjects like geography, and on practical work in all subjects. Coursework will carry at least 20% of the marks, and much more in some subjects. All teachers will have to keep detailed records of each pupils' achievement, which an external examiner will supervise.

Both the teacher assessment and the marking of examination papers will be done according to criterion-referencing for the first time, instead of norm-referencing as at present. At the moment only a certain percentage of pupils sitting an exam get the top marks, another band get middle marks and a set number fail – pupils are in effect judged against the standards set by their peers.

Under the new system, examiners will work with detailed criteria setting down what each pupil must know on each topic to achieve a certain mark. This is recognised to be much fairer than the present system and a long-overdue reform. Teachers will have similar criteria for assessing coursework. However, this sort of marking is much more time-consuming, especially first time round, when the system is new to everybody.

At the end of the summer term, schools closed two days early to enable all secondary teachers to have two days 'training' in the GCSE. This was to supplement the 'cascade' system which had been badly interrupted in some areas by industrial action. The original idea was for department heads to go away on courses and then return to coach other staff in their department at school. A survey carried out by the Social Democratic party in June found that attendance at the school-based sessions varied among authorities from 30% to 90%. Among subjects, it varied from 20 to 100%. Further courses will be run next term to sort out problems that arise during implementation.

After the two-day session, most teachers will now have received some training, such as it is. A North Yorkshire National Union of Teachers' official contrasted the two days of training with the eight two-hour sessions given by the Joint Matriculation Board when they launched a single new syllabus in 'A' level geography. But schools broke up for the summer holidays still short of syllabuses. According to the SDP survey, the Northern, Midland and Southern examining boards claimed that all their syllabuses would be out by mid-July, but Wales said they would not arrive until September and London said they would still be distributing them at the start of the autumn term.

On the subject of new books and equipment, Education Minister Chris Patten stressed in May that a new exam did not mean that all the old books should be thrown on the fire. He told the National Association of Head Teachers' conference in Cardiff: 'It is not sensible to take the view that you can only do a GCSE subject if you have a text book with GCSE on the spine'.

Even so, while basic reference books will be as useful as ever, there will be a need for books that coach children to take a more active part in learning, and focus on project work. The amount of practical work involved means that classrooms will need to be better equipped, to provide computers in geography lessons for work on graphics and statistics, electronic equipment for physics and more apparatus in all the sciences, together with technicians to monitor pupils' experimental work.

But after all this, there are still people who question how far the GCSE will be superior to present or past 16+ examinations. There will still be differentiation between abilities, in the form of different exam papers, more demanding for the more able pupils. The secondary examinations council claims that this will enable pupils to show what they have learnt, rather than what they do not know, but it could lead to a gap in the public perception of the value of the different papers.

Candidates will be marked on a scale of A to G, but again, there is a danger that the old

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'O' level grades, equivalent of the new A to C, will gain respectability in employers' eyes, while D to G become sub-standard. Those that fail the GCSE will be ungraded.

The GCSE is the sort of radical new exam that everyone has wanted for a long time. It would be a great shame if it were to fail, at the first hurdle, for lack of preparation. If it does, the blame must rest squarely on the shoulders of the government.

Sarah Boseley

Savage treatment

When Wendy Savage walks back into the London Hospital this month, she will have to re-establish her practice in the wake of a battle which split the medical profession in two. She will face colleagues who publicly sought to end her career and may yet succeed in preventing her from working as she would wish.

Ms Savage was suspended from her post as senior lecturer in obstetrics and gynaecology at the London Hospital medical college 17 months ago and charged at a highly-publicised inquiry with professional incompetence in five childbirth cases she had managed. In particular, she was accused of endangering women and babies by performing caesarian deliveries at too late a stage of labour.

The inquiry team conluded this July that Ms Savage had not been professionaly incompetent although she had been in error in some instances. In fact, said the inquiry team, Wendy Savage had acted as a caring and considerate practitioner, involving her patients as far as possible in decision making.

Just why Wendy Savage was suspended in the first place was a standard conversational gambit throughout the inquiry period. It was often seen as a battle between conservative male obstetricians, who believed in 'high tech' obstetrics involving frequent caesarian deliveries in the name of safety, and a pioneering woman who practised natural childbirth – which was not so safe but good for women's souls.

But Wendy Savage performed only about 4% fewer caesarians than the average rate for the London Hospital. She saw her position as one of giving women the choice wherever safely possible to give birth normally. And her colleagues could not be described as a group of gung ho knife-happy doctors. The London Hospital has a relatively low birth intervention rate, in part because it has neither the cash nor facilities for high tech obstetrics. The women who give birth at the hospital, many of whom are Bengali, do not want or ask for intervention.

The case itself has had an enormous effect on obstetrics, the medical profession in general and on consumers. Tower Hamlets, a poor health authority in a poor inner-city area, spent at least £250,000 on an inquiry which could have bankrupted Wendy Savage had she not won support from the Medical Defence Union. During the inquiry, the Association for Improvements in Maternity Services reported some consultants refusing to do late caesarians in case they were sued. Fear of litigation is partly responsible for the rise in caesarians. So the case has made glaringly obvious the need for some simple, cheap way of making doctors accountable by peer review.

Wendy Savage is not the only consultant to believe that women have a right to choose the way they will give birth, but given the growing alarm at the rising caesarian rates, it was inevitable that her case would be seen in polarised terms. In this country alone the number of caesarians has more than doubled since 1972 and one in nine women will have a caesarian today.

World Health Organisation research in 23 countries has found that obstetric intervention in normal deliveries has no effect on perinatal mortality rates and may even be harmful. This is backed up by American research and work by Oxford's national perinatal epidemiology unit. The Oxford unit also found that staff on salaries, doing NHS work for instance, perform fewer caesarians than those doing private work.

The Savage case publicly legitimised the style of obstetrics which allows for consumer choice, and the publicity surrounding the case has ensured that women will be more aware of the options. At the London Hospital itself, the maternity unit of the Mile End branch was forced to hold an open day after she had been suspended. Women had heard that the one woman consultant had gone and believed they would be at the mercy of knife wielding high tech advocates.

Few issues have proved how effective consumer demand can be, when women as the main health care providers unite with women as the main health care users. By the time the Medical Defence Union stepped in, the Wendy Savage Support Campaign had raised around £45,000 to pay for her defence.

Wendy Savage survived professional ostracism, a campaign of lies about her professional abilities and private life and managed to fight successfully against the might of the medical establishment. But how many health workers in less popular areas, such as mental handicap, and perhaps without such charisma, have been able to achieve the same?

As for the rights of the consumers, even in the Savage case, the women whose cases were used against Wendy Savage had no say in the matter at all.

Harriet Gaze

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A ROYAL COUP
Mrs Thatcher vs. The Queen

The crown has always seemed so closely identified with the Tory party. Few would have imagined, after 30 years on the throne, the influence of the queen would ever be used against a Conservative prime minister.

Andrew Gamble

FOR A BRIEF PERIOD in July the revelations in the *Sunday Times* that the queen was critical of many of the policies of the Thatcher government threatened to create a constitutional crisis. If the queen's views had been leaked deliberately then it was the first occasion for a very long time that there had been a direct intervention by the palace in domestic politics. It would have shattered the convention that the monarch can privately seek to influence her prime minister but in the end must always act on her advice and give no hint in public of any disagreement.

So close in the past has been the identification of the crown with the Tory party that royal power has always appeared a potential obstacle to popular sovereignty. Many on the Left suspected in the past that royal influence would be used as one more weapon by the establishment against a socialist government. Few imagined that it might ever be used against a Conservative prime minister.

Not surprisingly the conservative press and much of the Conservative party was outraged. Leading Tories quickly realised that whether or not the story was true it was sufficiently plausible to give the public the impression that there was a rift between the queen and Mrs Thatcher. MPs like Teddy Taylor immediately suspected an establishment plot to discredit Mrs Thatcher and replace her as prime minister.

she is allowed private opinions about policies and personalities, but only on condition that she never makes them public

Peregrine Worsthorne in the *Sunday Telegraph* went further. He appeared to accept that the palace had intervened against the prime minister with the queen's knowledge. He argued that so important was the queen to the British people after 30 years on the throne that the affair might do lasting damage to Mrs Thatcher and to her government. If the prime minister felt she no longer enjoyed the queen's confidence she might even resign.

Constitutional crisis

For a prime minister to be forced out by royal disfavour would indeed precipitate a constitutional crisis and might seriously weaken the monarchy. On every previous occasion this century, when there has been conflict between the crown and Downing Street, a threat by the prime minister that the king will have to find other ministers has been sufficent to compel the king to retreat.

Since the reign of Queen Victoria, and particularly since the 1936 Abdication Crisis, the role of the monarchy in British politics has been very tightly defined. The monarch is required to remain politically neutral. She is allowed private opinions about policies and personalities, but only on condition that she never makes them public. She sees cabinet papers; she reads Foreign Office telegrams; she has a weekly meeting with the prime minister; the laws passed by parliament are enacted in her name; the government is formally her government, but as a constitutional monarch she has no responsibility for the policies and does not seek in public either to influence them, praise them, or condemn them.

By appearing to be entirely neutral in public between the political parties the queen becomes the embodiment of the constitution, the guarantor of the framework of rules which govern competition between the parties. So long as the palace stays above the party fray – so long as it is understood that the queen gives utterance in public only to the thoughts of her current ministers and never to her own thoughts – then she can preside over governments of different parties, ideologies, and principles.

If the queen were ever seriously to depart from this stance the survival of the monarchy would be placed in danger. The constitutional functions performed by the monarch could as easily be performed by an elected president, as in most other countries. Once the queen were perceived as partisan, political opinion would become divided between the queen's friends and the queen's enemies, and the magic of monarchy would be gone.

The last British monarch who regularly flouted the constitution was Queen Victoria. She refused to accept several of Gladstone's nominations for ministers, and she constantly meddled in military and imperial affairs behind the backs of her ministers. She was an implacable opponent of Liberalism and she looked to the aristocrats among the Liberal leaders to restrain their followers. She did not think it possible, she once said, that Lord Rosebery: 'will destroy well-tried, valued and neces-

the private lives of the Windsors must present an image of respectability

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Illustration: Nick Davies

sary institutions for the sole purpose of flattering useless radicals.'

20th century monarchy

In this century the monarchy has become much more cautious and circumspect. With the rise of the Labour party and the advent of mass democracy the survival of the monarchy has depended on the occupants of the throne being prepared to conduct themselves in a manner of scrupulous impartiality towards elected parliamentary representatives. There has never been any question of refusing the royal assent to any legislation passed by parliament. Only rarely has there been any reluctance to follow the prime minister's advice on how the considerable prerogative powers of the crown (which include the right to declare war, the appointment of ambassadors, and the conferment of honours) should be used.

The demand for such detachment creates great strain. Despite her long experience as head of state the queen is obliged to stay silent. She never holds press conferences because she is debarred from expressing her view on policy in public. Similarly despite her wealth and social status, the queen and her family are unable to act as they please. They have to behave at all times in appropriate ways.

This reflects the fact that the British crown is not only the embodiment of the British constitution but also the embodiment of the nation and the British 'way of life.' It has also become the focus for unity within the Commonwealth. Reconciling these different roles is not easy since they do not always point in the same direction.

As head of the Commonwealth, for example, as queen of several of the states within it, the queen is much more than just the queen of the United Kingdom. Tensions between the two roles are not surprising given the potential clashes between British foreign policy and the policy of the majority of the Commonwealth. The multiracial character of the Commonwealth and the preponderance of Third World states among its members defines the role the queen is expected to play. Being head of the Commonwealth is a very different role from being king emperor.

The nation

The monarch embodies the nation through close identification with key state institutions; in particular the armed forces. The queen is commander in chief and there has always been a special link between the royal family and different branches of the services. Royal princes have pursued service careers, Prince Andrew even accompanying the task force sent to repossess the Falklands.

the last British monarch who regularly flouted the constitution was Queen Victoria

Such identification of the monarchy with national institutions depends on these institutions being part of a broad political consensus. If the existence of a particular institution is strongly contested between the political parties then close identification of the crown with support for that institution can look like political interference by the monarch. The crown discharges its role as embodiment of the constitution and of the nation most readily when there is a substantial consensus between the political parties about the legitimacy and purposes of the key national institutions.

Periods of national unity are therefore crucial in shaping political consensus and in defining the political role which a constitutional monarchy can play. For Britain national governments have often accompanied such moments of national unity as in 1931 and 1940. The establishment of a national rather than a party government

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makes the role of constitutional monarch much easier to perform. It is hardly surprising that constitutional monarchs should form a strong preference for coalition governments and governments of national unity.

The same pressures can be observed in the monarch's role as embodiment of the British 'way of life', which has assumed greater and greater importance, especially as the constitutional role has declined in importance. What threatened the monarchy in 1936 was behaviour which offended the moral code of provincial England. The most serious charge against the king, in wishing to marry a divorcee, was that he was neglecting his duty – he was acting in a way which betrayed the high ideals which the monarchy should embody and to which its subjects aspired. The private lives of the Windsors must present an image of respectability and normality, which expresses a consensus on how people ought to behave and what practices and values they should observe.

In each case the role played by the monarch is defined by a political and social consensus on what constitutes appropriate behaviour. Elizabeth II, and her father George VI, have been adept at staying within the every narrow tram-lines which the role requires. Their success is evidenced by the absence of republicanism as a serious force in contemporary British politics. This makes it all the more surprising that after 30 years on the throne the queen should be suspected of interfering in party politics.

the establishment of a national rather than a party government makes the role of constitutional monarch much easier to perform

Party politics

The *Sunday Times* piece was instantly denied by the palace, and although the source of the story was later revealed as Michael Shea, the queen's press secretary, mystery persists on whether the disclosures were authorised by other members of the queen's private office or even by the queen herself; whether the story was largely fabricated by the *Sunday Times;* or whether there was a simple misunderstanding between the palace and the newspaper.

The last two explanations are most widely believed. The original intention of the *Sunday Times* was to write a background piece exploring what was known of the queen's political attitudes on a number of issues. With the exception of the queen's disquiet about the use of airbases in Britain for the bombing of Libya, nothing new

was disclosed in the article that had not already appeared somewhere else.

In the week before the *Sunday Times* piece speculation about the queen's attitude towards a possible break-up of the Commonwealth on the issue of sanctions against South Africa had been rife. Some journalists were predicting that the queen would be prepared to 'go public' to change British policy and avert a major split in the Commonwealth. The queen's support for a multiracial Commonwealth, and therefore the priority she placed on good race relations in Britain, had been clearly indicated in her 1984 Christmas broadcast (for which she received a rebuke from Enoch Powell). Her dismay at the diviseness and social polarisation created by the miners' strike had been made public at the time.

What made the *Sunday Times* piece so sensational was not its content but its presentation. By transferring it from a background focus piece into a front page lead, the paper implied that for the first time the palace was deliberately leaking the queen's political opinions in order to achieve a political objective – influencing the position of the British government at the Commonwealth summit.

The fear that this might be so caused grave disquiet among constitutionalists of all parties. Staunch royalists declared that if the queen had known about the leak, and had authorised it, then she would no longer be acting as the queen. Therefore she could not have known about it. She had been let down by those acting for her and they should resign forthwith.

Questioned by Gallup a majority of those polled supported the queen against the prime minister over sanctions and the Commonwealth, but a majority thought that, on other matters, the prime minister's view ought to prevail; (although so deep is democratic culture in this country that no less than 30% believed that the queen's view should always prevail over that of the prime minister, whoever it was and whatever the issue).

It is still hard to believe that the palace intended a deliberate leak, given the caution which has been a hallmark of the palace style up to now. But it is worth noting that, deliberate or not, the leak did have an important immediate consequence. It was not sufficient to persuade Thatcher to alter her stand on sanctions but it greatly assisted the other Commonwealth states to stay within the Commonwealth. Evidence of such a clear rift between the policy of the Thatcher government and the attitude of the crown allowed Commonwealth leaders to remain loyal to the crown and the British connection, while damning the British government.

Thatcher's isolation

Longer term effects are hard to estimate. The episode appears as one more instance of the antagonism that has developed between the Thatcher government and important parts of establishment. It therefore contributes to the sense of increasing isolation of Thatcherism within British politics. Its allies and supports are crumbling away.

Yet at times in the history of Thatcherism the crown has been a vital support, never more so than during the Falklands war, when the identification of the palace with the national mission to recapture the islands helped to strengthen Thatcher's image as a strong, national leader. The echoes of the 1940s and of Churchill were not missed by the conservative press.

a very different set of problems were posed for the crown by the advent of more ideological politics in the 1970s

The Thatcher government benefited enormously from that link. But it has undoubtedly suffered from the identification of the crown with that other potent source of national consensus which also derives from the 1940s, and is centred around the extension of citizenship rights,

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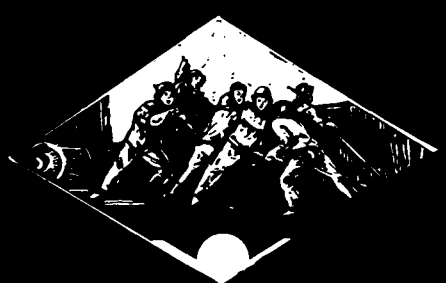

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and the acceptance by the state of responsibilities for mitigating social and economic inequalities through welfare programmes and regional and industrial intervention.

The consensus on domestic policy that emerged between the parties did establish certain institutions and objectives of national policy within which all parties worked. The extent of agreement on the broad parameters of policy between the parties, eased the task of the sovereign. Labour prime ministers were, if anything, even more eager than their Conservative counterparts to uphold the constitution and play their prescribed role within it.

A very different set of problems were posed for the crown by the advent of more ideological politics in the 1970s and the election of a government with a radical purpose in 1979. In a more divided and polarised community, the role of the crown becomes less certain. The public rhetoric of the monarch since the 1940s has stressed the ideals of national and international community, the duties and rights of citizenship, and public service. Continuing to voice them in the 1980s brings conflict with many of the new priorities of Thatcherism, which has been attempting to redefine many of these terms and to supplant the culture of public service with the culture of enterprise.

Enterprise culture

The British monarchy fits uneasily into the new enterprise culture. Prince Philip has occasionally given advice to the workshy, but apart from selling themselves and taking an intermittent interest in the management of their estates and vast holdings of wealth, the Windsors have not been noted for their contribution to enterprise. They grace and reinforce a social hierarchy of status based on family and inherited wealth rather than on talent, effort, and risk-taking.

Identifying the royal family with a particular company would be like identifying the royal family with a political party

From a Thatcherite perspective they help to perpetuate the anti-enterprise culture. Asked why none of the royal princes pursue careers in industry rather than in the armed services, the answer from Prince Philip was a revealing one. Attaching a prince to a particular company would give that company an unfair competitive advantage. Once a prince always a prince. Identifying the royal family with a particular company would be like identifying it with a particular party.

To have a space within which to move, the modern constitutional monarchy requires the largest possible degree of political consensus. The consensus can shift. The consensus of 1931 is very different from the consensus of 1951. But the monarchy shifts with it. This makes it an obstacle to those forces, whether Right or Left, which seek to challenge the consensus.

The style of the monarchy is a consensus style, stressing reconciliation and the minimising of disagreements rather than polarisation and conflict. This hardly makes the monarchy a progressive institution. But it does mean that the monarchy like the Church is more often a critic of Thatcherism than its ally. It is a further indication of how tenacious the institutions and assumptions of social democracy remain and how difficult it has proved for even Mrs Thatcher's government to overturn them. □

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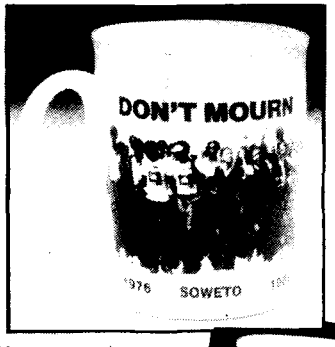

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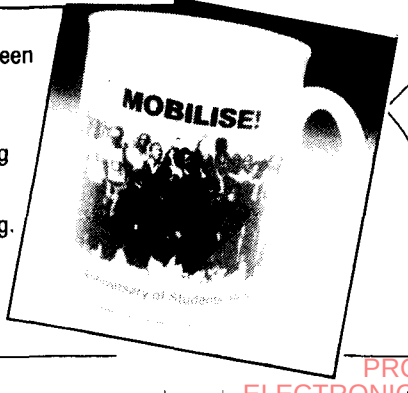

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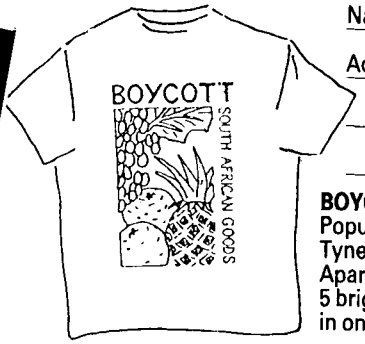

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TUC SPECIAL

NEW WAVE UNIONS

The trade unions have not had a happy time since 1979. Thatcherism, unemployment and restructuring have combined to give it a rough ride. Now is the time for some new thinking. John Edmonds, general secretary of the General Municipal Boilermakers & Allied Trades Union, could play a key role in this process.

Beatrix Campbell interviews John Edmonds

You are one of a new generation of trade union leaders, the 80s men, who are going to be very important in shaping modern trade unionism for the rest of this century. How far do you talk with the other men who might constitute part of a new left axis? How much do you see of them?

It is an illusion that there is a new generation of young trade union general secretaries. A lot of the newly appointed ones are well into their 50s and won't be around for that long. Now, because of the way the TUC works, with all its committees, all the leaders of large trade unions meet one another very regularly. There is scarcely a three-day period where two or three of the senior union officials are not together in Congress House. And inevitably there are discussions before and afterwards as well as the business of the meeting. So people get to know one another pretty well.

At the moment, many of the newer general secretaries are wondering whether the sort of *ad hoc* political groupings that existed in the past have really got much relevance. There was the right wing group, there was a centrist group round David Basnett, and an inner and an outer left group. There is, in other words, a whole series of groupings, with some overlapping membership. The difficult with them was that they didn't reflect as strongly as

they might have done some of the industrial differences between the unions, nor some of the basic truths about trade union voting strength, namely that there are three or four large unions with a tremendous influence on the making of Congress policy. There has been a certain impatience with the way in which some of these informal political groupings have worked. Rather in the same way as is happening within the Labour party national executive, where there are all sorts of changes of line-up, so the same thing is beginning to happen within the TUC general council. There is going to be a substantial change over the next year. We are going to see a much broader political grouping emerge based more on an industrial coincidence of interests.

Can you be more concrete about that?

David Basnett's retirement had considerable significance because he saw himself very much as a consensus man in the centre of the TUC. I don't see myself in that way at all. Some people thought the consensus approach, the desire to pull everybody together on every issue, was a great restriction on policy development. Then there was the fact that the AUEW had to a great extent contracted out of the TUC discussions. This was one reason why we got into the ballot money fiasco, because the AUEW wasn't really playing a part in the TUC.

What is happening now is that people are facing a choice. Individual unions have the choice. Will they go for a left-right-centre political division or will the major bases of policy-making rest on industrial self interest, with the political division being there but of less significance?

I'll give you an interesting example – the national minimum wage, which will be a major debate at Congress. The line-up on this cuts right across any political divisions that anybody could expect. There are far Right, far Left in favour and far Right, far Left against. People are making judgements on the basis of a very particular view of the self-interest of their members, because this is a real gut issue. It is real collective bargaining stuff, what value is a minimum wage going to be in the collective bargaining process? Is it going to be useful to us or is it going to reduce differentials and cause difficulties for us? And such responses will inevitably weaken some political divisions and groupings.

You seem to be implying a realignment within the trade union movement that is going to shift across issues and historic alliances in ways that aren't necessarily obvious. Take something very specific. Last year the Left had a clear position on ballots and trade union legislation. It is obvious that an awful lot of people who were saying one thing last year, a sort of moral principle posture, have been reflecting very hard about whether all that stuff is viable.

Not just whether it is viable, but whether we even want to be talking about this it any more. Everybody who went through last year's disastrous TUC knows that it was a tremendous turn-off for members and potential members alike. Four million unemployed, a massive low pay problem, major social services under attack and the TUC appeared to spend the whole week wrangling

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about whether we were going to expel the AUEW and the EETPU, and in the end we didn't. But no one quite knows why we didn't; and no one quite knows why we were going to! It was a disaster. And some of the very important debates like those on Cheltenham, which was an open goal for the trade union movement, were just buried without trace because of all these constant to-ings and fro-ings between one set of rooms and another set of rooms.

You said earlier that some of what I am calling realignment will be about power and industrial interests. But I also gather from what you are saying that it will mean a different political direction, which implies a criticism of the introspective obsessions of the last few years.

Yes, an explicit criticism of those. There is a feeling that we have got to draw up a new agenda now.

Right, what will that be?

It will mean a clear commitment from a Labour government on a specific reduction in unemployment within a particular timetable.

photos: Carol Ann Allen

To have a very specific commitment about low pay, mainly through a national minimum wage, and to couple that with a commitment on redistribution of income through changes in the tax system. Those, I think, are going to be the agenda items. They are popular and would command, if publicised and communicated properly, widespread support throughout the movement.

I would like to add one other issue which is at least as important, and that is the defence of a large and growing group of unorganised workers in the service sector, through changes in the law and legal rights for individual workers. I am not talking about the rights of trade unions, which is something that is going to have to be dealt with, but rights for individual workers.

We must accept that within the next decade trade unions are not going to be in a position to force contract cleaners, for example, to pay reasonable pay and conditions through traditional trade union organisation. We are not going to have effective trade union organisation in every large hotel in the country to the extent that we can persuade employers to pay reasonable pensions and sick pay to hotel workers. The whole private service field, particularly leisure, isn't well organised and is likely to remain significantly unorganised for all sorts of structural reasons, even if there is a new commitment to do something about it. That means you have

THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT

Everyone – the government, Labour party leaders, and union chiefs – are urging the unions to change. But change into what and how? Since the late 70s the unions have been attacked on a number of fronts. Some which are wholly or partly attributable to the government's policies may go away with the election of a Labour government.

But even some of the measures which have flowed from the politics of Thatcherism are likely to outlive the Thatcher administration. And beneath these political developments there are fundamental economic challenges to the unions' position. The British economy continues to shift away from the manufacturing heartlands of traditional unionism, and towards services – largely virgin, or barren territory for the unions. New technology is changing the character of work, skills and the traditional demarcations upon which so much union organisation rests. And many of the jobs which are being created are being taken by married women, working part-time – organising and representing this new periphery of workers demands a new approach from the unions.

So what is the state of the unions in Britain; what are the pressures upon them and how well equipped are they to deal with them? The information and commentary below has been compiled by Charles Leadbeater.

The ranks

The union ranks are still depleting. The membership of trade unions affiliated to the TUC is 9.5m, a fall of 274,000 from last year. There are fewer than 90 unions for the first time since 1872 when the movement's membership stood at 255,000. In the last 20 years mergers have reduced the number of unions from 170 to 89.

AGGREGATE UNION MEMBERSHIP AND DENSITY IN THE UK

Sources: Price and Bain 1983: 'Union Growth in Britain Retrospect and Prospect' British Journal of Industrial Relations Employment Gazette. *Annual Reports of the Certification Officer.*

Year	Union Membership (000s)	Potential Union Membership (000s)	Union Density (Level %)
1948	9,363	20,732	45.2
1969	10,479	23,153	45.3
1978	13,112	24,203	54.2
1979	13,289	24,264	55.4
1980	12,947	24,171	53.6
1981	12,106	24,189	50.0
1982	11,593	24,234	47.8
1983	11,338	24,162	46.9

This table shows that many of the gains unions made in the 1970s were lost in the first years of the 1980s. In 1980-1 alone the unions lost 1.3m members, almost 40% of the membership it gained in the previous decade. And falls in membership have consistently outstripped falls in employment. For instance in 1981 and 1982 whilst union membership fell by 11.6%, employment fell by 5.5%.

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got to rely on the law to create minimum rights for the people who work in those industries. And that, of course, raises all sorts of questions about the judges, how you enforce those rights and what role the trade unions would play if those rights were established.

Are you saying that short of the law changing there is nothing you can do to turn that situation around?

No, what I am saying is that you have to accept very considerable limitations on what trade unions can do because of the structure of those industries.

But people have always said that, for instance, about part-time women. There is a hint in what you are saying of an approach which suggests there are certain kinds of workers who are inherently unorganisable. And usually they are women and usually they are poor.

No, I am not. I hope I am not saying that at all. What I am saying is that if you have got an industry where the workforce is highly mobile, where they are not attached to particular employers for any length of time, then the organisational difficulties are very substantial indeed. It is obviously much more difficult to organise there than it is to organise in a factory of 500 people who have relatively long service records. Sadly, I think we have made the wrong assessment. The conventional wisdom in the trade union movement, which is entirely contradicted by all experience, is that we are going to succeed grandly and comprehensively.

In the traditional way.

In the traditional way. And all I am saying is that you just have to face facts. We are not going to succeed quickly and comprehensively. We have got to try an awful lot harder. We have got to spend a lot more money. We have got to commit substantial resources. My own union is doing all of those things. We have a new initiative under way with the Low Pay Unit in hotel and catering for instance. All I am saying is you have to be realistic about how far you can succeed. I am saying that we will not succeed entirely and we will not even succeed in large measure in a short time because the base is so low and the organisational difficulties are so great.

So the next question is how do you protect? We are interested in doing something to enhance the lives of working people, so what do we do with the people you can't organise at the moment? I want the trade union movement to be able to put an argument which means something to all working people and not to say, 'well, I am sorry you are the traditionally unorganisable, hard luck'.

See you sometime.

'Don't call us, we'll call you.' You have got to put together a strategy that does something for all working people.

Have you got thoughts about what that might be?

A system of legal minimum rights, including pay and hours guaranteed, unfair dismissal guarantees on day one for any service, any length of hours. Such an approach would enable us to uncover what is a scandalous situation, the fact that working people in Britain have very few rights compared with almost anybody else in the world. People are unaware of this. They think somehow there is a mysterious hidden set of legal provisions that says you get time and a half for overtime and three or four weeks' holiday.

We have got to campaign for such changes, which above all will help the unorganised. This will put the trade union movement on the side of the oppressed and the disadvantaged, which is a side of the argument we haven't actually been on for some time. It also puts us on the side of women, which is good because we have tended to be on the side of men, and it puts us on the side of short service and mobile workers in the service sector rather than manufacturing workers. So it puts us on what I regard is the right side of the argument. Now if *we* win, and we will win if we campaign enough – under any government to some extent – we will establish some legal rights and this will help us organisationally in these industries very substantially indeed. Because we can

photo: Carol Ann Allen

then go to the workers in a particular establishment and say, 'look, these are your legal rights. Are you getting them?' And if the answer is 'no', we can say, 'join us, we can make bloody sure that your employer does what he has to'. So it gives us a foot in the door in organisational terms which we haven't got at the moment.

Are you worried about a new-style social contract under a Labour government meeting the same fate as last time?

The trouble with incomes policies in the past has been that they were all so negative. They have all been about restraint. OK, the social contract had some very positive aspects associated with it. But at its heart it was negative. Now, the argument about reducing unemployment is very positive, and if we can make that positive achievement I think it will sustain the labour-union relationship in a way it was not sustained in the past. A reduction in unemployment is going to be the main issue, not incomes policy.

To what extent do you see the model of unionism you have presented – drawing in new sections, aspiring to represent the unorganised – clashing with the business union model of the EETPU?

The two philosophies are entirely different. Business unionism is the epitome of the sort of sectional trade unionism I am criticising. You know, 'you buy a service from us and we will work on your behalf, bargain hard on your behalf; and we will tailor our values and policies to ensure that you get a good deal'. That kind of approach tends to depress all the social and ideological values the trade union movement is meant to represent in the cause of narrow, sectional gain. And you might also jeopardise a few civil

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rights in the meantime, for example, the right to strike or the right to be represented in the way you want to be represented. You are giving up something fundamental in order to achieve a very narrow sectional advantage.

To the extent that business unionism means putting a glossy presentation to the employer, making sure everybody knows the range of services that you are providing, fine. I am all for that. But if it means subjugating some of the ideological demands and some of the values in order to achieve some marginal advantage in terms of a slightly higher pay rise, then I think that is very very wrong. You can't bargain about some issues because they are not the negotiator's property to bargain with. They are other people's civil rights and you can't trade them off. There is a direct conflict between these two trends. What I want to do is move the GMB in another direction. We are there particularly to protect people who are disadvantaged. We will protect those who are in the union by conventional means. And we will also campaign to protect those who are not in the union and hope they will eventually join us.

And what do you think is going to happen? Is there going to be a major cleavage between two different kinds of unionism?

No, because I think those unions which at the moment are advocating what you call business unionism are going to move away from that position. Some of the gains that have been claimed have been exaggerated, especially in terms of buying industrial peace. When there is an upturn in the economy, with a reduction in unemployment, and people feel more confident, many of the no-strike arguments will go out of the window.

It is known you are a supporter of the equality offensive both within and by the trade union movement. So what are you going to do to transform the conditions of women as employees in the union or of women with aspirations to represent women in the union? Because it is clear historically that Pat Turner, the GMB's women's officer, has had zilch infrastructure to support the work that she does. A third of your membership are women and yet you hardly have any women officers.

And the number has gone down as a result of retirements over the last few years.

So I gather. Now isn't there an idea for reserved seats for women on the Central Executive Council (CEC)?

It is one of the changes being proposed for the union's rules revision conference next year.

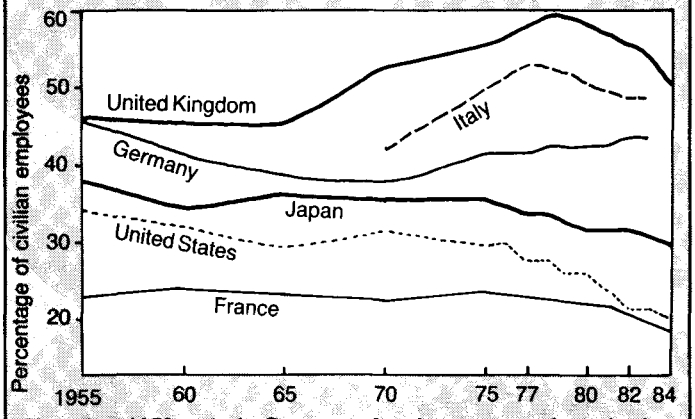
Right. So you are backing reserved seats. But what concretely is going to be done to progress the possibility of women being represented by women in the union?

We have to ensure that women are applying for and being elected to officer and staff positions. At the moment they are not for reasons we can easily identify. We also have the problem of most unions of a lower proportion of women stewards and branch secretaries than would be expected from the balance of the membership. So, starting at the bottom, this year we have allocated a very substantial sum of money for what we call the Women's Workplace Project, which is a seminar system intended to give women members who are not office holders a background of training in industrial relations. So they have both the equipment, and maybe more importantly the confidence, to take on

THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT

Union Membership

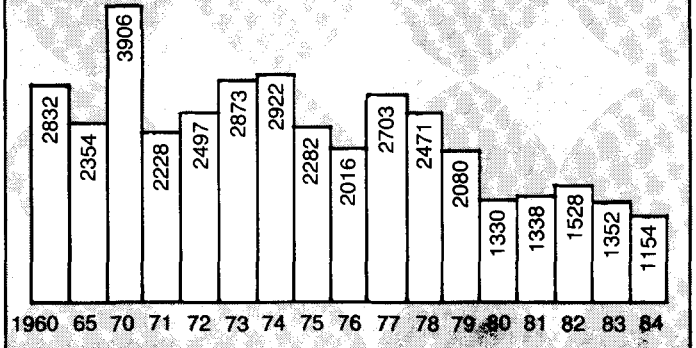
Source: Durham University Business School



Since the mid 70s only the German trade union movement has gained enough members to increase the proportion of the workforce who are unionised. Though no other movement enjoyed the growth in membership that the British movement had in the 1970s.

STRIKE TRENDS 1960 – 1984: NUMBER OF STRIKES

Sources: PK Edwards 1983 'The Pattern of Collective Action' from Bain Ed Industrial Relations in Britain and Employment Gazette



Strike statistics, once the measure of trade unions' abuse of their strength, are no longer so newsworthy. That is because there has been a dramatic decline in strike activity. The number of strikes is now at the lowest level since 1938. Even when the figures are adjusted for the fall in union density there has still been a dramatic fall in the 'real strike rate'.

STRIKE TRENDS 1960–1984: WORKER INVOLVEMENT AND DAYS LOST.

Sources: PK Edwards 1983 'The Pattern of Collection Action' from Bain ed, Industrial Relations in Britain and Employment Gazette.

Days Lost (000s)	Year	% lasting less than 3 days
3024	1960	76.7
2925	1965	68.8
10980	1970	54.9
13551	1971	50.7
23909	1972	48.5
7197	1973	49.0
14750	1974	42.8
6012	1975	40.7
3284	1976	46.7
10142	1977	41.0
9405	1978	42.4
29474	1979	42.0
11964	1980	51.4
4266	1981	55.5

As the table shows the large industrial stoppage rose to prominence in the 1970s, but small disputes became more important in the 1980s.

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UNION READING

The Economic Decline of Modern Britain, The Debate Between Left and Right
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Wheatsheaf.

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office within the union at lay or at full-time level. That was piloted in Yorkshire.

Did it have a measurable impact on the representative structures?

In certain industries, particularly in local authorities and the health service. We are now extending that system throughout the country, in an attempt to encourage women activists or women who look as if they might be prepared to be more active in the union.

At the branch or workplace level we are introducing a new branch office holder, the branch equality officer, to be elected in every branch in the country. And their major responsibility will be to ensure that the various equal rights programmes we have are actually carried out. The major criticism we have had in the past is that we have extensive policy but people do little about it. There is going to be a new office holder with that specific and clear-cut responsibility. If you have one person, in each branch, it means that you have got the best part of 3,000 people across the country with that specific responsibility. You can also get the people together very, very easily. I believe that there is a very strong argument for reserved seats on the CEC and that we ought to make that decision quickly.

Now as far as officers are concerned, we really do have enormous difficulties in changing the balance because we have had a large number of retirements and by accident a higher proportion of women officers retired than men. Moreover, the number of officials who are going to be replaced in the next five years is remarkably small. So we have a very difficult problem. We have got to change the gender balance as far as we can, but practically in the short term it is going to be difficult to do so.

You are inheriting a fairly old structure and a personnel that is going to stay with you. Now how far does that constrain your room for manoeuvre in securing the politics you are interested in within the union? And how much room for manoeuvre is there to change the union's interventions in the Labour party? You have a dozen sponsored MPs, all on the Right, and on the party's NEC the GMB is a strong right-wing presence.

I am not sure of that analysis; a lot of things are changing very rapidly in the party. I don't think that our sponsored MPs have taken up policy positions that are in conflict with what I have just said. They have taken up policy positions on other issues which I suppose you could say put them on the right, but not on the issues that we have been talking about. But how much freedom for manoeuvre does anyone have in a large organisation? We have our structure, we have our policy-making committees, we have our annual congress and that is where the decisions are made.

But take the longer-term. The nature of the union's membership is going to change quite rapidly. We are going to have to recruit a lot more women, because the industries we are talking about are predominantly staffed by women employees. That is going to change the nature of the union. We are going to have fewer members in manufacturing industry and be representing many more disadvantaged people. We are therefore going to be arguing for a national minimum wage, the list of legal rights I talked about and income redistribution. We are going to want a substantial social wage, because there is no point in ensuring people are lifted a little bit out of poverty if they have to pay for their health service or their education or whatever. All those things are going to be moving us towards the left, and that is going to come inevitably out of this change in union membership.

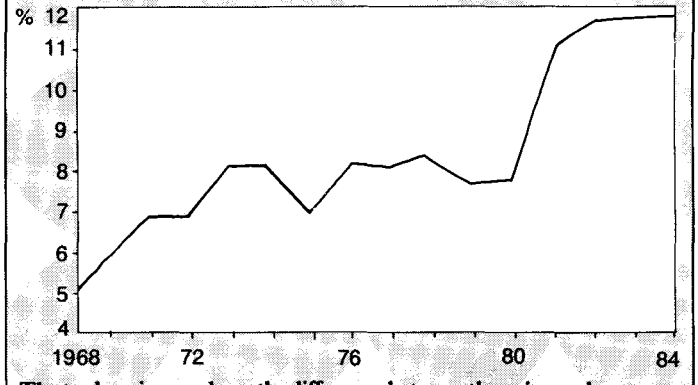
THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT

The going rate

The theory that lies behind the government's anti-union legislation stresses one overwhelming evil of the unions: they are a market distortion. Unions push up the pay of their members, thereby cutting company profits and making employers less willing to take people on, so the theory goes. With the unions attacked on several fronts at the same time, one would expect their influence on pay to have lessened. A recent poll conducted for the *Financial Times* showed that only 16% of employers said that union strength would affect pay determination in their firm in the coming two years. Interestingly the *Financial Times* poll found that 74% of companies said profitability affected pay negotiations. City analysts expect company profits to rise by 17% this year.

DIFFERENTIAL IN AVERAGE EARNINGS BETWEEN UNION AND NON-UNION MALE MANUAL WORKERS

Sources: D Metcalf and SJ Nickell – 'Jobs and Pay' Midland Bank Review 1985



The trade union mark up, the difference between the union and non union rate for the same job, stands at its highest ever level. The 'mark-up' rose from around 8% in 1978 to 12% in 1981.

DISPERSION OF GROSS WEEKLY EARNINGS: FULL TIME ADULT WORKERS

Source: D Metcalf and SJ Nickell, 1985 'Jobs and Pay' Midland Bank Review.

	Lowest 10%	All Men	Highest 10%
1975	67.0		157.6
1979	66.0		156.9
1984	61.6		171.5

But figures for pay dispersion suggest that there may have been a qualitative change in the dynamic of the mark up. Under the Thatcher governments there has been a marked widening of pay differentials. Low paid, non unionised workers have taken the brunt of employers attempts to win real wage cuts. It may be that unionised workers only seem to be better off in comparison with the low paid who are doing much worse.

The new law

The government's legislative programme is a distinct break from most developments in labour law since 1906. Since the second world war governments have accepted a split between industrial relations and labour law, on the one hand, and incomes policies on the other, to contain the economic effects of collective bargaining. Under the Thatcher government labour law has been redirected to serve economic ends.

The policy is aimed at fragmenting and isolating unions, by creating legal barriers to the exercise of solidarity. The legislation defines the legitimate area of union activity as the members 'own place of work'. Under the 1980 Act sympathy or secondary action ▶

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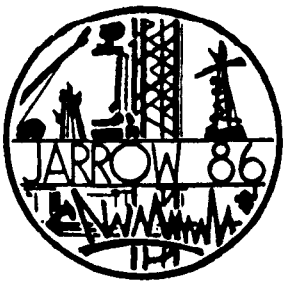
This October Jarrow will march again with touring theatre show HEADS HELD HIGH specially written for Jarrow '86 by Brookside writer Alan McDonald, with music from Alan Hull of Lindisfarne.



March for jobs from:

JARROW
October 5th

Chester le Street
October 7th

Ferryhill
October 8th

Darlington
October 9th

Northallerton
October 10th

Ripon
October 11th

Harrogate
October 13th

Leeds
October 15th

Wakefield
October 17

Barnsley
October 19th

Sheffield
October 21st

Chesterfield
October 22nd

Mansfield
October 23rd

Nottingham
October 24th

Loughborough
October 25th

Leicester
October 27th

Market Harborough
October 28th

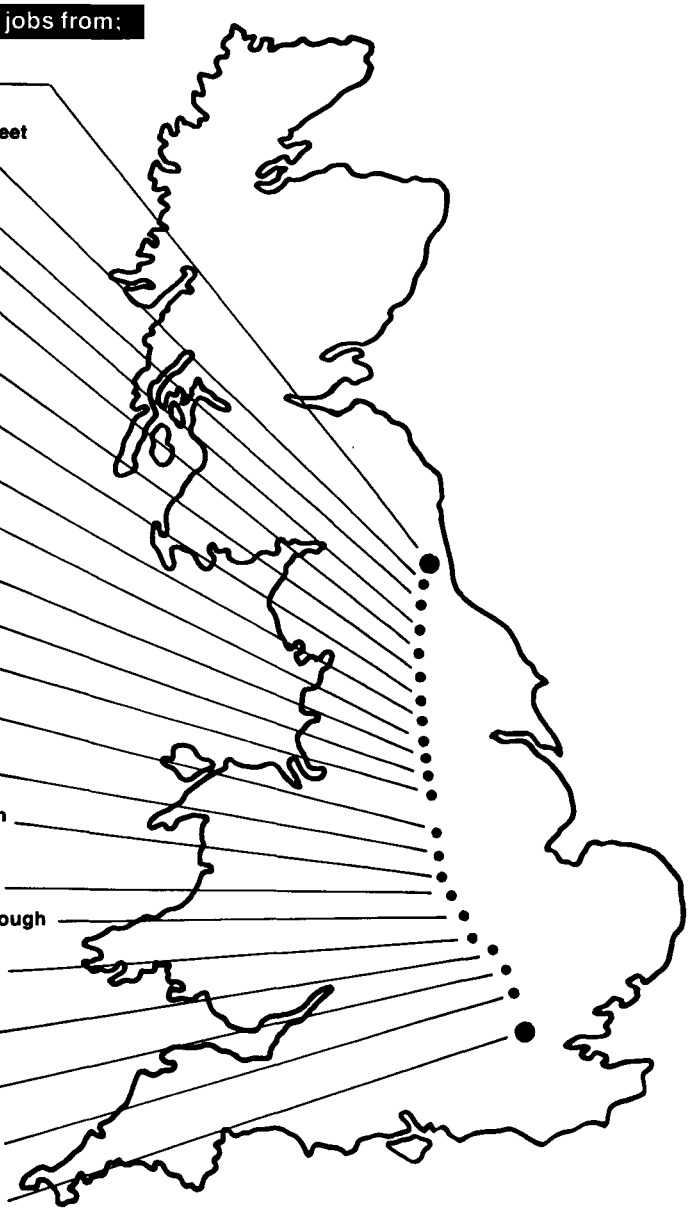
Northampton
October 29th

Bedford
October 30th

Luton
October 31st

St Albans
November 1st

London
November 2nd



See the Show at:

Community Centre
October 1st-4th

Park View Comprehensive
October 6th

Leisure Centre
October 7th

Dolphin Centre
October 8th

Town Hall
October 9th

Hugh Ripley Hall
October 10th

Cairn Hotel
October 11th

City Varieties Theatre
October 13th-14th

District College
October 15th

Technical College
October 17th-18th

City Hall
October 19th

Goldwell Rooms
October 21st

Leisure Centre
October 22nd

Victoria Leisure Centre.
October 23rd

Martin Hall Theatre
October 24th

De Montfort Hall(tbc)
October 26th

Community College
October 27th

Nene College
October 28th

Corn Exchange
October 29th

St Albans(tbc)
October 30th

Edgeware (tbc)
October 31st

London, Shaw Theatre
October 5th-22nd
(not Sundays or Mondays)

Yes, I'd like to support the JARROW 86 march for jobs, and campaign against unemployment.

I enclose £5 to become an individual sponsor plus a donation of £_____

Please send me information about HEADS HELD HIGH, the play for JARROW 86, on tour from Jarrow to Edgeware throughout October, and at London's Shaw Theatre in November ☐

Please send me details of where I can march ☐

Group affiliation rates on request.
Detach and return to JARROW 86, The Electric Press Factory. 39 Cookridge St, Leeds LS1 3DW, together with your name and address.

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You have got a pro-CND position but you have also got a very difficult course to navigate in the union around the question of nuclear power, since you represent workers in the nuclear power industry.

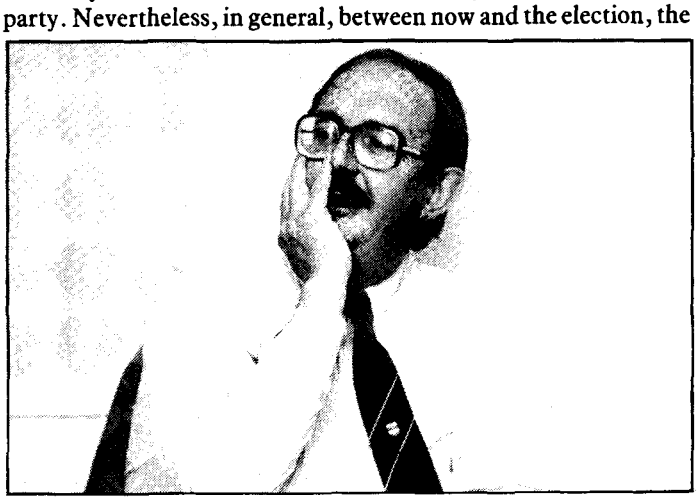
I am not in favour, personally, of the close-down of our civil nuclear power industry. I represented the electricity and nuclear workers for a number of years. There is a lot that needs to be done about safety standards in the industry as far as the public and our own people in the industry are concerned. But I do not believe we should lightly close down a major industry.

Is the political work of the union entirely focused on the Labour party, or is it also about the generation of a politics in the union which is more to do with other movements? I have a feeling that it is very Labour party focused.

At the moment it is. And I can't see any change in that respect in the run up to the election. It is focused on trying to gain commitment to the party, activists for the party and providing policies.

But you yourself have often been very critical, of the kind of sealed train that the labour movement seems to live inside, its isolation from popular culture.

Yes, I agree with that entirely. I have just one substantial reservation to make about your diagnosis, and that is in respect of women's rights, where the activity in the union is not specifically or clearly related to the rather less than totally clear policies of the party. Nevertheless, in general, between now and the election, the



Labour party is going to be the major focus of attention. You can criticise that very easily by saying, 'this is just trying to create an electoral success and the real question should be for what? And why not talk about the policies?'

OK, we must get a Labour government elected. But unless public feeling is shifted it won't be. Greenham Common and CND have shifted public opinion on peace where the Labour party and the trade union movement haven't. People's feelings for the Third World have been affected not by the Labour party or the trade union movement but by LiveAid and SportAid. These are examples of the way in which people's minds have been changed away from Thatcherism, which is undoubtedly good for Labour's prospects of getting in. But the Labour party didn't do it. Can we imagine within the trade union movement the possibility of other kinds of political activity – on the ground, amongst members, to do with changing hearts and minds on issues that are close to their hearts? Privatisation, for example.

THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT

EMPLOYMENT CHANGE 1984-1990

Source: GMBU internal document

	Proportion of total employment %		
	1984	1990	Net change
Primary industries	3.8	3.3	−0.5
Manufacturing	23.6	21.3	−2.3
Construction and utilities	7.7	7.7	—
Transport, communication and distribution	20.7	20.6	−0.1
Professional and miscellaneous services	22.6	25.8	+3.2
Social Services and Public administration	21.6	21.4	−0.2

According to the GMBU report manufacturing employment will continue to fall till the end of the decade. Primary industries, mining and agriculture show the next largest job loss. The only job gains will come in private sector service industries.

no longer enjoys the protection of the common law.

The price unions have to pay for retaining what immunities from the civil law that they still enjoy is an exacting process of internal democracy.

Another element of the strategy is an attack on the unions themselves. For the third time this century unions themselves, rather than their officers, are liable to damages. Crucial to these measures introduced in 1982, is the idea that if an action by union members which does not have immunity from the civil law is also endorsed by a responsible person within the union, then the union is liable for damages arising from the action.

New jobs, new conditions

A stream of recent reports projecting future employment trends present most unions with bad news and hard choices. One of the most recent from the Employment Research Institute at Warwick University, was commissioned for the GMBU. The table shows the report's broad conclusions about how employment will shift in the next six years. These broad trends mask some particularly acute falls in areas of union strength: an 18.4% fall in coal mining employment; 27.9% in oil; 20.5% in motor vehicles; and 26.1% in tobacco. The services emerge as the only significant growth area: 11.2% in insurance; 10% in the health service, and 17.1% in general services, including hotels, restaurants and garages.

Male employment will fall by around 600,000, whilst women's will rise by 400,000. Full-time jobs will fall by 1m whilst part-time will rise by 900,000. Manual jobs will decline by 409,000, (semi-skilled jobs will fall by 11.5%), whilst non-manual jobs will rise by 553,000.

The *Financial Times* poll also showed that small businesses will be the largest source of job growth in the next few years. But unions tend to fare better in larger establishments.

And new technology will increasingly affect the character of work. The *FT* poll found that 59% of British companies plan to introduce new technology in the next few years, which will affect levels of employment, job classifications, and skills.

Other labour market projections show that there will be a continuing growth of peripheral jobs – people working part-time, at home, or short-term contracts. This periphery supports a core of full-time workers in secure well-paid employment. Many of those in the core of manufacturing at least are union members. Their security is at least in part due to their union. The challenge for the unions is to see whether they can get into the areas of employment growth – areas which are unfamiliar territory.

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We can already. We are involved at local and national level in a whole host of campaigns on privatisation. And in the water privatisation campaign we were deliberately attempting to make a widespread coalition including the green movement and other interests.

Yes, and very successful.

Unfortunately, the government backed down too soon. You have not only got to win, you have got to win at the right time. Regrettably we didn't get the shift of public opinion that we might have done had the campaign gone for six or nine months because it was only just out of first gear, we had only just got the coalition together. Then there is the concerted attempt within the health service against privatisation, with the unprecedented co-operative action between the four unions. We are also playing a much more active role in CND at all levels than we have ever done or thought of doing in the past, encouraging participation at all levels. And we are trying with some success to encourage our local branches and workplace groups to involve themselves in sponsorship of cultural and community activities in a much more thoroughgoing way than we ever have before.

Sponsorship, though, isn't perhaps quite the right word. We had a discussion on sponsorship at our annual congress and I was surprised to read in the *Evening Standard* soon afterwards that the chairman of Chelsea Football Club was saying that he would welcome £400,000 of sponsorship from the GMB! That is not what we are interested in at all. What we want to do is spend some of the union's resources in trying to sponsor local developments. Which could be anything from a local festival on almost any subject under the sun, through to well-women clinics. Now of course we are doing that in order to publicise the GMB, but we are

also doing it to ensure that people recognise trade unions as a legitimate part of the whole community and not just as some sort of industrial and semi-political group which comes around and kicks people from time to time.

What did you feel about the whole LiveAid phenomenon, and the union movement's abstention from it?

I said at the Labour party conference last year that I thought it was one of the saddest events in the recent history of the labour movement. Here we had a movement which attracted very widespread support, particularly among young people, which was absolutely consistent with and part of the set of values that the labour movement holds. It was one of the most important political events of last year. And yet the labour movement was just not part of it at all. These should be our people and they weren't. It was terribly depressing. Now there is a suggestion about Union Aid. But it's too late, I'm afraid.

Do you feel in your own life that you are there? I mean you have got kids, you have even been seen at a conference carrying a carrier bag with shopping in it, which suggests you are a normal human being!

Extraordinary. You know, I cut myself on holiday and I actually bled! I find it difficult to deal with questions like that.

The importance of it is this. Trade union leaders have a very demanding life which requires a heavy level of servicing. So how much ordinary contact you have with people, either through the union or your own kids, is clearly important. Because that is a measure of how culturally isolated you are or you are not. Do you do your own housework? Are you somebody who just expects to be serviced, and is serviced, or are you somebody who takes responsibility for the immediate world that you live in? So they are not trivial questions, are they?

I wasn't trying to say they were trivial questions. I just had this sense of shock that they should be asked. How do you think the bloody shopping gets into the Edmonds household?

I don't know. How does it?

We go out and buy it. Actually, I go out and buy it because my wife works on Saturday. And that is the day I can usually go. The union is paying me a lot of money and they want me, I suppose sensibly, to work for them as much as they can get out of me. I do have a personal staff who service me in the union. My wife says she has detected a change in attitude as a result of the fact that someone else blows my nose while I am general secretary. But I am also John Edmonds, I live in an entirely female household – wife, two daughters and all the animals are female – I have to make my contribution. My family will not allow anything else.

The union doesn't support me as a member of that family in Mitcham. When I play cricket I have to carry my own bat. When I go shopping I have to push my own trolley. ❑

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UNEMPLOYMENT A Resistible Force

Bob Rowthorn

Unemployment is not inevitable. It can be prevented. Sweden, Norway and Austria bear witness to this. But it requires a strong working class *with* a clear strategic perspective.

IN 1973 THERE were 11m people officially classified as unemployed in the advanced capitalist countries. Today the figure is well over 30m. This huge increase has occurred in two waves, first during the economic crisis of the mid-1970s and again during a similar crisis in the early-1980s. Unemployment has now stabilised and for the moment at least is no longer rising. However, there is no sign of any significant reduction in unemployment and a further increase cannot be ruled out.

In retrospect, it is clear that 1973 was a turning point in the history of advanced capitalism. Until then full employment was seen as the norm, a goal to which all advanced capitalist countries could reasonably aspire. Nowadays, it is often seen as a virtually impossible objective.

The optimism of the 1960s, which believed that anything was possible if only we had the will, has been replaced by the pessimism of the 1980s, a belief that events are beyond our control and that mass unemployment is now a permanent and incurable feature of modern capitalism. Such fatalism is not just a British phenomenon, but is common in much of western Europe, especially in the EEC countries. It is encapsulated in the opinion of the Dutch employment minister, cited by Therborn, that unemployment is caused by 'an anonymous evil force at work against which we can do nothing'.

Goran Therborn's new book *Why Some Peoples are More Unemployed than Others*[1] sets out to challenge this fatalistic view. His theme is that mass unemployment is not an inevitable and universal feature of modern capitalism. On the contrary, it is a localised phenomenon, which is confined to specific countries and is the result of specific institutional and political factors.

Even under modern capitalism, he argues, mass unemployment can be prevented through an appropriate combination of social arrangements and government policies. In countries where such a combination exists, near full employment can be maintained indefinitely even under conditions of world economic crisis such as we have experienced since 1973. However, where such a combination is absent, full employment is always precarious and any major shock or crisis may lead to mass unemployment.

Differing experiences

To establish the importance of the institutional dimension, and thereby identify the conditions under which mass unemployment can be prevented, is the main purpose of Therborn's book. To this end, he examines the experience of 16 advanced capitalist countries both before and after the historic turning point in 1973.

when they were hit by the crisis, these countries all took vigorous measures to prevent mass unemployment

Using a wealth of empirical material, he shows the economic diversity of experience between these various countries. Some have experienced an almost negligible increase in unemployment since 1973, whilst in others the increase has been truly gigantic. For example, in Switzerland less than 1% of the labour force is officially unemployed, whilst in the UK, the Netherlands and Belgium the figure is more than 12%.

He also shows how the social meaning of unemployment varies radically from one country to another. In some countries it is young people or adult women who are primarily unemployed; in others the unemployed are mainly adult men. In some countries unemployment is typically of short duration lasting only a few weeks; in others it may often last for several years. In some countries, unemployment benefits are generous; in others they are miserly. As Therborn stresses, such differences are important, not just because of their human dimension, but because of the light they throw on institutional factors and the influence of the latter on the level and nature of unemployment.

Having extensively documented the complex nature of unemployment and the extent of international diversity in this area, Therborn goes on to examine the reasons for such diversity. In particular, he seeks to explain why it is that certain countries have had a comparatively good record on unemployment since 1973, whilst in others the record has been so abysmal.

His observations on this topic are fascinating. He rejects crude mechanical theories which argue that mass unemployment is the automatic result of such factors as lower profits or slower economic growth. Whilst accepting that profits and growth have some influence on unemployment, he convincingly demonstrates how much flexibility there is in this relationship. On average, profits and growth have fallen by almost as much since 1973 in countries with a good record on unemployment as they have in countries where unemployment has risen dramatically.

What differentiates one type of country from another, according to Therborn, is not their ability to maintain profits and growth after 1973, but their ability to maintain full employment despite such a reduction in profits and growth. This conclusion contradicts both orthodox and Marxist theories of unemployment. Even so, the evidence appears to support Therborn.

The successful five

If crude economic theories do not explain why some countries have avoided mass unemployment, what then is the explanation? Therborn's answer is as follows. There are five countries in which unemployment, as officially measured, has remained remarkably low: Austria, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. In all of these countries the unemployment rate is still well below 4%, whereas in most other advanced capitalist countries the figure is between 8% and 13%. What is special about this group of countries?

According to Therborn, the answer lies in what he calls their 'institutionalised commitment to full employment'. By this he means: (a) an explicit commitment to

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maintaining/achieving full employment; (b) the existence and use of counter-cyclical mechanisms and policies; (c) the existence and the use of specific mechanisms to adjust supply and demand in the labour market to the goal of full employment; (d) a conscious decision not to use high unemployment as a means to secure other policy objectives.

when the world crisis hit Switzerland, unemployment was kept down by expelling foreign workers and reducing the employment of married women

Therborn argues that when the world crisis hit these five countries in the mid-1970s the goal of full employment was already firmly institutionalised in their political and economic systems. In all of them, he argues, there existed both the political will to preserve full employment and the mechanisms for achieving this objective. When they were hit by the crisis, these countries all took vigorous measures to prevent mass unemployment, and it is this activism which explains why they still have much lower than average unemployment rates.

In most other capitalist countries, however, the situation was quite different. Their commitment to full employment was superficial or non-existent. As a result, their measures to contain unemployment were half-hearted, and in some cases unemployment was even used as an instrument of economic policy to reduce costs and discipline the trade unions. Not surprisingly, most of these countries now suffer from extremely high levels of unemployment.

The role of the working class

Amongst the low unemployment countries identified by Therborn, two radically different types are distinguished. At one extreme are Norway and Sweden. At the other are Switzerland and Japan. Somewhere between them, according to Therborn, lies Austria. What differentiates the two groups is the role of the working class.

In Norway and Sweden the working class is strongly organised and exerts a powerful and continuous influence on economic policy. In both these countries the institutional commitment to full employment is an expression of a broad social consensus in which the organised working class plays a politically dominant role. Ultimately, therefore, the determination of these countries to maintain full employment is a reflection of working class power.

This is clearly recognised by Therborn, though its full implications are never brought out fully. For example, he never really considers what it means to say the working class is powerful, nor does he consider the strategic questions involved in the exercise of such power.

The *determination* of Norway and Sweden to maintain full employment is clearly a result of working class power. At the same time, however, their *ability* to achieve this objective depends on the fact that working class power is used in a particular way. In both Norway and Sweden, the trade unions display an impressive ability to act strategically, sacrificing short-term economic goals in return for longer-term political and economic objectives. There is, in effect, a permanent 'social contract' under which organised labour obtains full employment and a comprehensive welfare state in return for wage moderation and co-operation in economic restructuring.

Without this kind of co-operative behaviour by the trade unions it would be quite impossible for Norway and Sweden to maintain full employment over such a long period of time under conditions of world crisis. In both countries, the unions have the power to create economic chaos, should they choose, and no project for full employment could conceivably work without their co-operation.

This is all tacitly accepted by Therborn, though nowhere does he seem to recognise its importance. Nowhere does he theorise the role of organised labour in Norway and Sweden; nor does he analyse the political and organisational problems involved in a strategy of social compromise of the kind observed in these countries. I find this very odd.

The answer, I suspect, is that Therborn

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is schizophrenic about the whole idea of social compromise. On the one hand, he clearly recognises the need for compromise if a capitalist economy is to function effectively and maintain full employment under conditions of world crisis. On the other hand, he is unwilling to assert this openly, nor does he discuss the mechanics, limits and dangers of social compromise. As a result, it is not always clear what he actually believes. For example, in the case of Sweden, he implies that the unions have been right to accept wage restraint as the price of full employment during the world crisis. Yet elsewhere he criticises these same unions for achieving such a modest increase in real wages during this period.

Wage restraint and, more generally, social compromise are, of course, especially difficult topics for marxists to consider objectively, steeped as we are in a tradition which glorifies unrestrained class struggle and stresses the irreconcilable conflict between capital and labour. However, unless these topics are discussed openly and objectively, we shall never understand how Norway and Sweden have been able to maintain full employment during the present crisis. The economic restraint of trade unions during this period is an essential part of the social compromise which has made full employment possible.

The same is also true, though to a lesser extent, of Austria. Although weaker than its counterparts in Norway and Sweden, the Austrian working class still has considerable economic and political power. Moreover, as in these countries, it has used this power to strike a bargain with other social forces, under which vigorous efforts are made to preserve full employment in return for economic restraint by the unions.

Many marxists find social compromise of this variety distasteful because of its supposedly repressive character. According to the critics, such a compromise requires the creation of a centralised trade union bureaucracy whose task is to police the compromise and keep in check the more militant and, by implication, more revolutionary, elements within the working class.

A few marxists, such as the Swede Korpi, claim these fears are exaggerated and see social compromise as the only realistic path to socialism. In their eyes, compromise is inevitable and the task for marxists is to understand the dynamics of compromise and to chart a way forward which augments working class power and maintains the pressure for social transformation.

Therborn himself, I imagine, is broadly in agreement on this point. However, this is not made clear in the book and at times he gravitates in the opposite direction, appearing to reject the very notion of compromise. The result is a theoretical incoherence in which the need for social compromise is for the most part tacitly accepted, but the nature of such a compromise, together with its dangers and limits, is never explicitly analysed.

the fact that Japan has avoided mass unemployment is . . . largely an accidental, if desirable, by-product of the country's continued economic growth

The Swiss and Japanese cases

So far we have been discussing Norway, Sweden and Austria, in all of which there is a strong and largely united working class. The situation is quite different in the two other low unemployment countries, Switzerland and Japan. In these countries the working class is numerically strong, but is weak and fragmented. Political power lies firmly in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Yet, according to Therborn, both of these countries have pursued policies designed to minimise unemployment and in both of them, he claims, full employment is institutionalised in the economic and political system. As Therborn himself admits, such a conclusion is surprising and requires some explanation.

His own explanation is as follows. In both countries there is a strong national bourgeoisie which is concerned with social order and stability. To achieve these objectives they have created institutions which protect the bulk of the workforce against unemployment. In the case of Switzerland this is done by assigning employment to Swiss men and unmarried women at the expense of Swiss married women and foreigners. In Japan it is done partly through the so-called life-time employment policies of large firms and partly through more general government policies.

Thus, when the world crisis hit Switzerland, unemployment was kept down by expelling foreign workers and reducing the employment of married women, neither of whom are generally included in the official unemployment statistics. The same procedure, incidentally, was also employed in Austria, though on a far smaller scale. When the world crisis reached Japan, many industrial workers who were strictly required were kept on and later transferred to other activities. All of these responses were, according to Therborn, the result of an institutionalised commitment to full employment, deriving ultimately from the desire of a strong national bourgeoisie to preserve social order and national unity.

Japan and growth

Interesting though it is, I find the above argument unconvincing. Take the case of Switzerland. According to official statistics, the unemployment rate is less than 1% in Switzerland and the country apparently enjoys virtually full employment. However, this is a mirage. As Therborn himself points out, there has been a considerable reduction in the proportion of Swiss nationals, especially women, in employment since 1973. As a result there is now a large amount of unemployment in Switzerland, particularly among women, who suffer widespread discrimination. However, most of this unemployment is not recorded in official statistics and remains hidden from view. Even if we exclude the foreign workers expelled in the mid-1970s, there are still many Swiss nationals who are without work, but who are ignored in the official statistics.

For Therborn to talk of a commitment to full employment under these conditions is extremely misleading. As he himself stresses, Switzerland has a dismal record on employment since 1973, and the true level of unemployment is many times greater than official statistics imply. Swiss employment policy may have peculiarities which need explaining, and Therborn's explanation for them may well be correct. But to describe this policy as a policy for full employment is quite simply a misnomer.

I also have reservations about Therborn's treatment of Japan. Despite its great importance, Japan receives the most cursory examination in his book. Little evidence is provided of any real commitment to full employment.

Certainly, many big firms operate a so-called lifetime employment policy, but as he points out such firms employ a minority of the workforce. Many of the rest are employed in small firms which do not operate such policies. At a government level, there is certainly a commitment to sustained economic growth, but this is not matched by anything like such a well-defined commitment to full employment.

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The fact that Japan has avoided mass unemployment is not, in my view, the result of any well-defined commitment to full employment as such. It is largely an accidental, if desirable, by-product of the country's continued economic growth. Should Japanese growth come to an end, as for example happened in Sweden during the 1970s, the result would almost certainly be a considerable rise in unemployment. Lifetime employment policies could slow down this rise, but they would not prevent it.

The message for us

On the evidence presented by Therborn, I remain unconvinced that either Switzerland or Japan really does have a well-defined commitment to full employment. The only countries in which this is the case are Norway, Sweden and Austria. In each case, the commitment is the outcome of an historic compromise in which a powerful, and, for the most part, united working class struck a bargain with other social forces.

These compromises have sometimes involved a great deal of friction and the terms of the bargain have required periodic renegotiation, but without them it would have been impossible to maintain full employment throughout the world crisis. This is the hidden message in Therborn's book. How far this message is acceptable to the British Left is an open question.

The British labour movement failed to secure a durable commitment to full employment. From as early as the 1960s, the commitment to full employment was gradually eroded. When the world crisis struck in 1973, chronic unemployment became part of the British landscape. The

chronic unemployment became part of the British landscape

labour movement's failure was primarily a product of its own endemic sectionalism and its consequent inability to develop a clear strategic perspective with overall goals and priorities. And the left within the labour movement must share the responsibility. Over recent decades it has been more concerned with sectional militancy than strategic transformation. In the present rethinking, we have much to learn from Sweden, Austria and Norway. □

1 *Why Some People Are More Unemployed Than Others*, Göran Therborn, Verso, £6.95.

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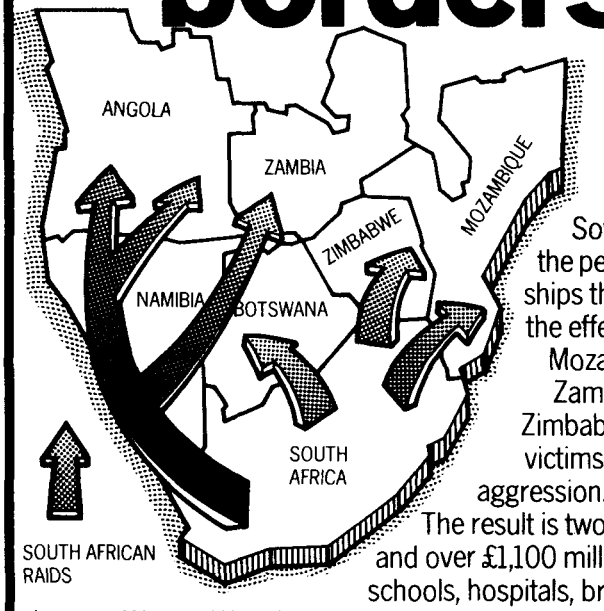

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising. Since Soweto it's not only the people of the townships that have suffered the effects of apartheid. Mozambique, Angola, Zambia, Namibia and Zimbabwe have all been victims of South African aggression.

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WHY DO WOMEN WRITE?

The last 10 years has seen a flourishing of women's writing. Women writers of the 19th and early 20th centuries have been rediscovered alongside the publication of new women writers, using new styles and subjects. Are they part of a tradition of women's writing? Who do they write for and how does their writing intertwine with the rest of their lives? This discussion is taken from Women Alive, an event for women sponsored by *Marxism Today* in July.

GRACE NICHOLS

Born in Guyana in 1950 where she worked as a reporter, Grace Nichols came to Britain in 1977. She has written a number of children's books, collections of poems and a novel, Whole Of A Morning Sky, *(Virago).*

I I can't speak for other women writers I can just speak for myself, and touch on a few of the things that excite me, that get me going as a writer. Writing isn't a logical activity for me, it's like a disease that keeps me alive. In writing, what I'm trying to do, I guess, is to keep my own spirit alive. It's a way of participating in the world and I think it's what I do best.

I feel I don't have to accept the world that says: 'The black woman is invisible,' for example, or 'women on the whole are invisible'. I can recreate the world again, more to my own liking. I can write against stereotypes, as I have done with the *Fat Black Woman's* poems which is a cycle about a fat black woman who rejoices in herself – she is a bit of an anarchist, a universal kind of figure.

Of course as a writer, I'm very excited by language, and coming from the Caribbean I use both Creole or Nation language, as well as standard English. I find blending the two in my work every exciting because Creole is a very rich concise language. I like using both, so for example, in my poetry one line might be in Creole, and the other line in straight English, and sometimes I blend it in such a way that the words in the line are recognisably English but the rhythm is Caribbean.

I'd like to illustrate the point by reference to a poem about shopping in London. This one is called the *Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping*:

> Shopping in London in winter
> is a real drag for the fat black woman
> going from store to store
> in search of accommodating clothes
> and de weather so cold
> look at the frozen thin mannequins
> fixing her with grin
> and de pretty faced sales girls
> exchanging slimming glances
> thinking she don't notice
> Lord, is aggravating
> nothing soft and bright and billowing
> to flow like breezy sunlight
> when she walking
> The fat black woman curses in Swahili
> Yoruba and Nation language under her
> breathing
> all this journeying and journeying
> The fat black woman could only conclude
> that when it come to fashion
> the choice is lean
> Nothing much beyond size 14. . .

Here you can see the words are recognisably English but the rhythm is very much Caribbean.

There are other points I want to touch on. As a writer I'm very much interested and excited by mythology: the images and archetypes that have come down to us over the ages. I'm particularly interested in the effect these have had on the psyche of black people, and on women too, because we live very much in a white patriarchal culture.

We are all familiar with an all-powerful male white god and the biblical associations of white with light and goodness which you all know, and black with darkness and evil. Black people were the cursed children of Ham. The whole world of European fairy tales and legends, princes and princesses, Snow White and Rapunzels, all these images still feature in the heads of black people as powerful, magical, the divine.

At the same time we've also been fed on the opposite images of our people as inferior, evil, powerless, nothing was created in Africa we were told. I'm interested in the psychological effects of this on black people and how, even up until today, these images influence the minds of white people themselves.

Once when I was having a discussion on the subject, a white woman in the audience made the point that darkness was frightening. Children were afraid of the dark because they couldn't see into it. I agreed with her I myself put on lights when I'm feeling a bit scared, but what the white imagination has done is to transfer this terror of darkness onto a whole race.

I'm amazed, fascinated to say the least, how whenever a white person, whether writer, painter or dramatist, has to portray an evil, ugly monstrous character they inevitably make that character black. It is as if the white imagination can't help depicting like this because it is the ultimate in terror.

The English language itself – which offers so many possibilities – is guilty of holding an incredible amount of narrowness and negativity when it comes to the word black or anything to do with blackness, thereby perpetuating racist stereotypes and myths. I feel that we have to come up with new myths and other

photo: Virago

Grace Nichols

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images that please us. After all the myths and legends of old were created by poets and remain powerful sources of the imagination to be drawn on again and again. Odysseus and his rolling ship did a lot for my imagination as a child and I'm thankful to him.

So literature isn't a static thing. We have to keep on creating and re-shaping. Speaking as a black writer, we have to give our children something more in life than just sitting down in front of tv and looking at *Superman, Dallas* and *Dynasty*, so that when they look out upon the world they can see themselves represented in the miraculous.

As a writer I'm very much interested in exploring my female heritage – past, present and future – both in terms of being black and in terms of being a woman. As a black woman, I feel a part of the feminist struggle, but I think that black women on the whole are not only concerned with male oppression but also with racist oppression. Look at the situation in South Africa, people are fighting for basic human rights. So for me the feminist struggle and the black struggle are part of the wider movement for human freedom.

photo: Company Magazine

Fay Weldon

FAY WELDON

After working in the Foreign Office writing information papers about Eastern Europe, Fay Weldon entered the world of advertising. Now an established writer of fiction, her most recent novel was The Shrapnel Academy *(Hodder & Stoughton).*

Sounds such a simple question, doesn't it? – why do women write? Four short words. But you could go on about them forever. 'Women' is a pretty powerful word, isn't it; 'write' is very powerful. As to 'why', it's one of those trick words; somehow, if there's a why, the implication is there has to be a because, and the answer is not quite ever going to be as simple as that.

So I think I'll do what one of the children passing 'A' levels, or trying to pass 'A' levels, told me to do when faced with a trick question. Answer by just sort of throwing the question itself about a bit. . . I'll divide the question into three, shall I? Why do *people* write, why do *women* write, why do *I* write?

Then I'll say something rather old-fashioned and not necessarily approved of in these circles, for example that I think people write because they are born to do so. Some people are born good at maths, some people are born good at painting, some people are born to play the piano. In the same way, some people are born to write: it is, I'm sorry to say, the luck of the draw. If you don't have the peculiar gift of getting the thoughts and feelings out of your head and onto a piece of paper, and communicable to other people, don't try to write fiction.

But don't despair. You may have it! Because you're not writing yet doesn't mean you're not a writer. Would-be writers are often asked, 'Well what did you do as a child, did you write?' as if this was going to prove something. I didn't write much then; the ability was not apparent, it surfaced later: but I still maintain it was an in-born gift. Now what anyone actually does with this ability depends very much on their circumstances, on opportunity, and that again, I am sorry to say, is the luck of the draw. It depends on the world they are born into, the temperament they have. Hardly under their control. Not fair!

Why do women write, as opposed to people? Unlike men, they don't seem to become writers of fiction for money, success or fame. I think they write to communicate. There is, after all, a great deal to be said. Now you can communicate on all kinds of levels. You can, as a contemporary woman, go to writers' workshops; you can write pamphlets, you can circulate poems, stories, ideas, amongst others of your kind. What's been done for women's writing over the last 10 years on this level has been amazing and wonderful; through the women's presses, through the women's workshops, the writing of serious fiction has stopped being an elitist form. It is now possible for ordinary working women to write for other ordinary working women to read, and so understand that they are not alone, or isolated.

When a woman writes she is trying to make sense of a chaotic and often very unfair world: she is trying to find a pattern in it, and a way through it. Now to my mind this is done best through fiction, whether through novels, short stories or screenplays. Poetry of course can work powerfully upon the imagination. Grace Nichol's poem suggests to me a whole screenplay: except it doesn't take up so much time and space: its effects are economically achieved.

As to *why* women write. . . others seem to know more about this than I do. There's a whole new area opening up of feminist literary criticism. This is a new way of discussing literature, the ins and outs, the whys and becauses. It's interesting. Don't ignore it. Let me quote a bit about the Gyno criticism from Elaine Showalter's book *The New Feminist Criticism*:

> 'In the past decade I believe this process of defining the feminine has started to take place. Feminist criticism has gradually

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> shifted its centre from the visionary readings to a sustained investigation of literature by women. The mode of feminist criticism engendered by this process is the study of women as writers and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women. The cyclodynamics of female creativity, the trajectory of the individual or collective female career and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition. No English term exists for such a specialised critical discourse so I have invented the term Gyno-critics.'

I like that. Well of course I would. It's nice to be taken seriously.

All the same, it doesn't provide an answer as to why women write. I could find very little on this. It was mostly dedicated to what women wrote. I did find a quote from Virginia Woolf. She was wondering if she should write a diary: 'There looms ahead of me,' she wrote, 'the shadow of some kind of form which a diary might attain to. I might in the course of time learn what it is that one can make of this loose, drifting material of life, finding another use for it than the use I put it to so much more consciously and scrupulously in fiction.' Well, making something out of the 'loose drifting material of life' is what we writers, major and minor, try to do. She has such a knack of putting her finger on things, doesn't she?

As to why *I* write, if I can defy the new Gyno criticism and answer for myself, I started writing simply to get by. I had this alleged talent for getting what was in my head onto the page, and pretty soon discovered that I could cheat with it, survive by it. I passed exams as a child, without having to know a great deal, because I was able to put sentences together in a way which convinced examiners that I actually knew what I was doing. That got me to college.

When I emerged into the outside world I began to write outright lies, shamelessly; that is to say I got a job in the Foreign Office. I worked for a secret department; we were writing information papers about current events in Eastern Europe. We knew what our bosses wanted to hear, and construed the facts accordingly. We knew where our bread was buttered, knew what we were expected to write and, being 20 or so, I did it, having at that age very little conscience and having to pay the rent.

If you write propaganda, in the end you deceive yourself; you manage to convince yourself that what you are writing is truth not lies. It's dangerous. I think I got out just in time.

I then got a job in advertising – which I will have to come clean about – and was indeed responsible for, if only as a group-exercise, the slogan 'go to work on an egg' which appeared on many a hoarding throughout the land. Now advertising is not lies, it isn't allowed to be, but it is not the truth either: it is an exercise in the way meaning exists in the gaps between sentences. That's where the truth lies. If you are a clever reader of advertisements you can discover what's going on, and I hope you do, by noticing what's left out.

Anyway, so I survived. I lived by passing exams, and getting to college, and paying the rent, by using this particular alleged gift of mine to bad effect. Then one day I saw the light and started writing the truth, if in fictional form, and to my mind haven't looked back because there is so much to be said and I don't see any reason to stop.

The world changes around me and people expect different things of me. I don't believe that my view of the world is necessarily the right one, and do expect people to argue with me. In fact I write almost in the hope of being argued with, so that between us both, the reader and the writer, we will somehow, if we work hard enough, come to a proper vision of the world we live in. That's all. □

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The Sectarian Divide: Ireland After The Accord

Paul Bew and
Henry Patterson

Violence has intensified amongst both Protestants and Catholics since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. What are the prospects for the future?

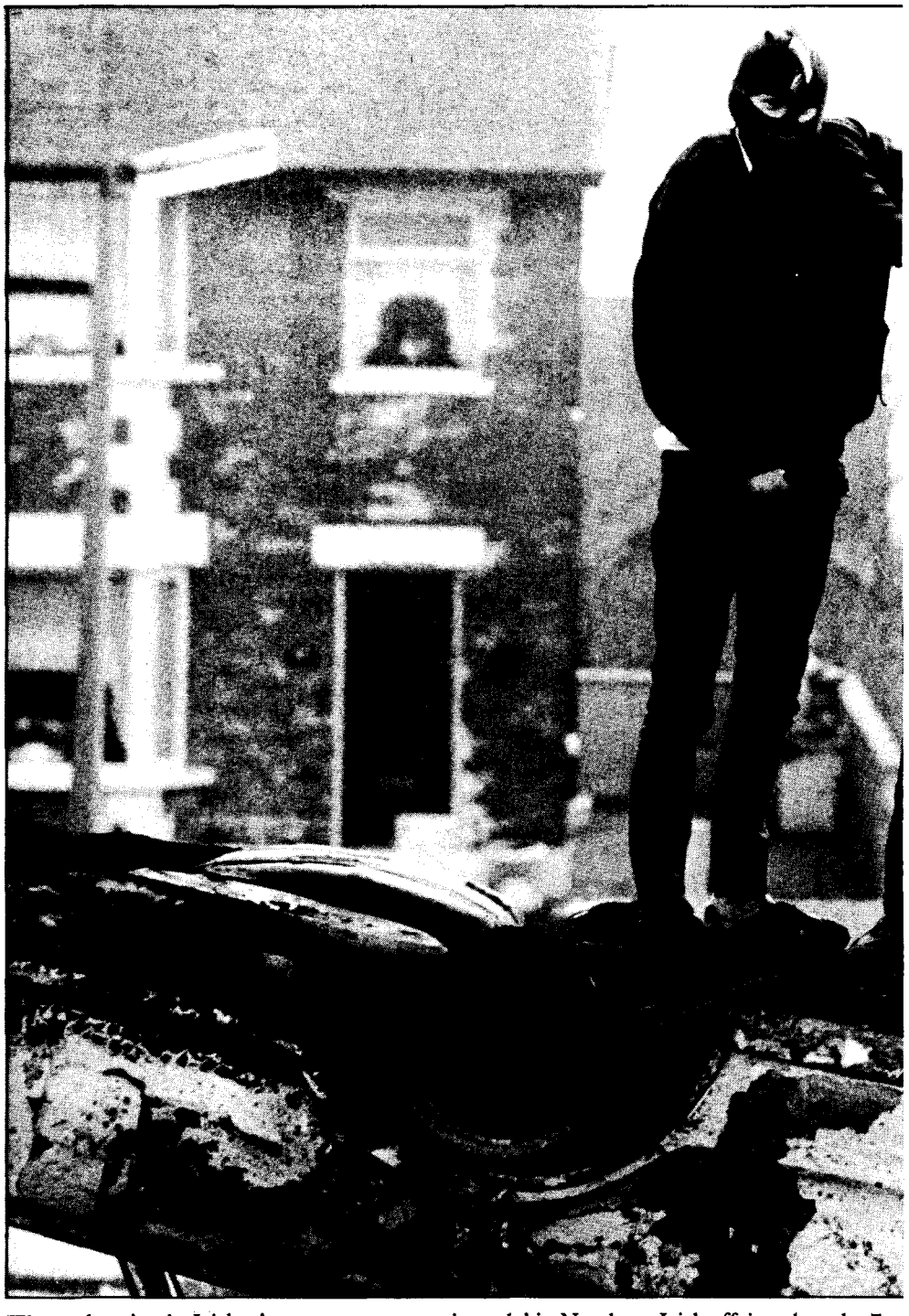

photo: Camera Press

When the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed last November it was widely hailed as a triumph of enlightenment which offered the hope of peace and reconciliation to the people of Northern Ireland. The principal feature of the Agreement was the establishment of an Anglo-Irish inter-governmental conference, serviced by a secretariat including Irish officials, based in Maryfield, Co Down. A key phrase in the Agreement states 'determined efforts shall be made through the conference to resolve any difference'; in effect, this means that the Irish government has been given a 'more than consultative role' in Northern Irish affairs, though it clearly amounted to less than the joint authority demanded by Dublin's New Ireland Forum, embracing the main parties of constitutional nationalism, in May 1984.

The Hillsborough Agreement then was a highly ambiguous document. While it spoke of the need for Unionist consent to a United Ireland it provided no explicit means – such as a border poll – of measuring that consent, and nowhere spoke of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the UK. The Accord insists that 'there is no derogation from the sovereignty of the

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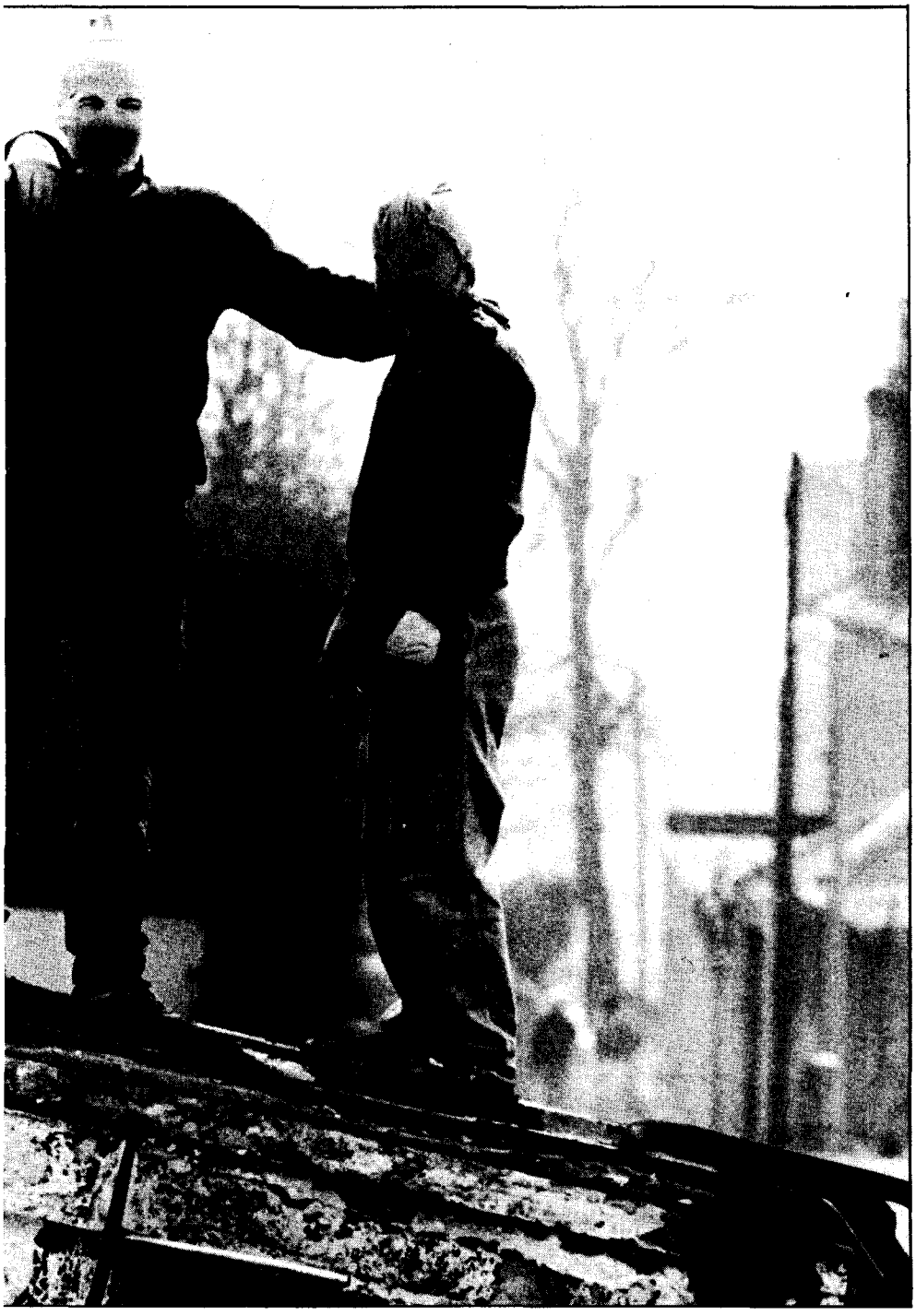

Masked Loyalist: three youths stand triumphantly on the remains of a burnt-out car set alight during the violence that followed the signing of the Accord.

British government' But Mary Holland, an *Irish Times* journalist, who has excellent access to the views of the Irish government, insists, not without reason, that it represents 'a severe erosion' of British sovereignty in Ulster.

In fact, 10 months later, much less optimism surrounds the working of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It has been associated with a severe and entirely predictable increase in communal tension; this was expressed at the political level by the sharp drop in support for the non-sectarian Alliance in the province's January mini referendum.

The Accord has had no impact on the Provisional IRA's campaign except perhaps to intensify it as the Provisionals gleefully mobilise to exploit the new tensions between Ulster Protestants and the British government. The fruits of improved security cooperation with Dublin have so far been trivial. Protestant sectarian killers, who have been relatively inactive in recent years, have returned to their grisly business. Significant enforced population movements are again reported. Unemployment, which hits the Catholic community hardest, has risen to over 22% whilst the closure of local businesses intensifies. In other words, there is a good case for arguing that what there is in Northern Ireland now is not some temporary 'hump' which has to be got over before improvements can take place, but rather manifestations of a process which will continue so long as British policy remains unchanged.

The Protestant community

The initial reaction of almost the entire Protestant community to the Anglo-Irish Agreement was one of shock and dismay; a fact which was registered in the large Unionist vote in the January elections. In the early part of 1985, the Unionists, both Official Unionist party (OUP) and Democratic Unionist party (DUP), appeared to be running scared. The Protestant political leadership had felt the chill wind of British disapproval and for the first time were somewhat uncertain. They dropped their demand for a scrapping of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and called instead for a 'suspension'. If a suspension were to take place, they implicitly promised to negotiate seriously with the Social Democratic Labour party (SDLP) on power sharing and devolution. At this point, the British and Irish governments probably overplayed their hand; had the Agreement been suspended the Unionist leadership would have been under significant pressure within its own community to resolve the crisis and Ulster's apparently exposed position within the Union – by dealing generously with the constitutional leaders of the Catholic nationalist community.

Robinson is a tough and shrewd politician who has changed the DUP style

The possibility that the Agreement might lead to power sharing – always a long shot – receded and is now off the political agenda for the foreseeable future. In more recent months, the Unionists have got used to the shock of living on the 'window ledge' of the Union, as the phrase has it, and there now seems to be little pressure on the leadership to reach a deal with the British government or the SDLP. There is instead a widespread assumption that a period of protracted political struggle lies ahead.

Much media attention has been paid to the emergence of Peter Robinson, the hard line Democratic Unionist MP for East Belfast. In particular, Robinson attracted attention during the mass Loyalist strike

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or 'day of action' in March, in which he was well to the fore. The DUP, heavily influenced by Paisley's small town and rural evangelicals, found it difficult to get a foothold in Protestant working class Belfast in the 1970s. Robinson made the key breakthrough for them when he won the East Belfast seat in 1979 and he has consistently pushed up his vote since then – turning East Belfast into a safe seat in a way which Gerry Adams has yet to do in West Belfast.

Grammar school educated, Robinson is a tough and shrewd politician who has changed the DUP style in certain respects. Though personally highly traditional on religious matters, he is, for example, prepared to allow a ratepayer's vote on the matter of Sunday opening of an ice skating rink in his Castlereagh Bailliwick, something which the more traditional Paisleyites – fanatically loyal to the 'Ulster Sunday' – would baulk at. Robinson seems to have good relations with forces such as Alan Wright's Ulster clubs movement and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) which are at the sharp end of Unionist resistance to the Anglo-Irish deal. To a degree, Robinson's recent prominence merely reflects a bout of unusual hesitancy on the part of the Reverend Ian Paisley.

Paisley, who has aged visibly, has hardly seemed to be the apparently awesome force he once was. He was caught off guard by the signing of the Agreement and for some months he appeared to be bemused and politically out of sorts. His responses lacked their usual sureness, notably when it appeared for a brief moment in February that he had accepted Mrs Thatcher's terms for a compromise. The closure of the Northern Irish Assembly in June was a particular blow to Paisley's prestige as he, more than anyone, had invested a great deal in this summarily dismissed elected forum. The mass nocturnal occupation of Hillsborough in July has however restored the DUP's traditional momentum. Robinson was merely building on this by his participation in the occupation of Clontibret, a village two miles inside the Irish Republic. There is no sign as yet, however, that the DUP can challenge the Official Unionists' dominance in Protestant politics.

Official Unionism

The Official Unionists are more respectable, less willing to countenance a massive confrontation with the British state. They were shocked by the wave of Protestant attacks on the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in March and have now disavowed the use of the strike weapon. Their leader, Jim Molyneaux, is a relatively quiet, colourless politician who nurtures 'integrationist' rather than devolutionist views. Yet, the Offical Unionists, have been significantly influenced by the most surprising and unexpected political development of recent months: the emergence of the Campaign for Equal Citizenship led by Robert McCartney, a liberal Unionist QC with self confessed 'socialist leanings'.

Essentially, the campaign argues that the refusal of the main British parties to organise in Northern Ireland condemns the province to a politics based on the endless repetition of sectarian slogans. It seems clear that McCartney's argument has had a major impact on Official Unionist opinion – especially on the young Unionists – and the devolutionist lobby in that party is now very much on the retreat. In Jim Prior's day, the Northern Ireland Office liked to speak of the five realities which govern Northern Ireland politics. It may just be that we should now add a sixth: there will be no settlement based primarily on devolution because the Official Unionists are not interested enough and the Democratic Unionists – who would dearly love to have Stormont back – will never offer satisfactory terms to the SDLP.

the closure of the Northern Irish Assembly in June was a particular blow to Paisley's prestige

The Catholic community

On the Catholic side, political developments have been more predictable. One of the British government's key objectives on signing the Agreement was to reduce Sinn Fein's electoral support, as a prelude to the isolation of the IRA.

The results of the January mini referendum appeared to suggest that the Agreement had done just that. But two May council by-election results in Magherafelt and Fermanagh saw Sinn Fein's vote return to pre-Agreement levels. It is doubtful also, that they will suffer as a result of

photo: Camera Press

Flying the flag: the day of protest was organised by Unionist leaders determined to break the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

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the increased communal aggravation of the summer. Once again they claim to stand as protectors of the Catholic community. The SDLP, the party of constitutional nationalism led by John Hume, was intended to be the principal beneficiary of the Agreement and most of its members still support the Anglo-Irish process.

The recent largely cosmetic reform package (changes to flags and emblems, measures to aid the Irish language and a new police complaints procedure) as announced by junior Northern Ireland Minister Nicholas Scott, is an attempt to sustain, or perhaps more accurately, regenerate the momentum for this group. The SDLP has lost some face recently because of the Agreement's failure to deliver concrete benefits to the Catholic community, and – to take a particular case – because of the RUC's decision to allow an Orange march down the Catholic Garvahy Road in Portadown on July 12.

the Protestant political leadership had felt the chill wind of British disapproval and for the first time were somewhat uncertain

The Agreement itself is very much the achievement of the SDLP leader, John Hume. Hume has argued repeatedly that when the British government finally stood up to the Loyalists, a more compliant leadership would emerge on that side. The current period is providing a harsh test for that proposition.

To put the matter in context, it is worth noting that there has always been a tendency in Hume's analysis to downplay the role of the tactics of Irish nationalism in ensuring the dominance of intransigent currents in Loyalist politics and, as a corollary, to overestimate the potential role of the British state.

Hume continues to insist that in the autumn – 'Bully Boy' tactics having failed to break Thatcher – 'reasonable' Unionists will emerge to negotiate with him. Few can be found to accept this scenario; even Nick Scott, whose views often seem to be a jaded and nihilistic reprise of Hume's – without Hume's relatively attractive Parnellian theme of eventual reconciliation – talks of a five year long haul; it is not an enticing prospect.

The Republic

Meanwhile, Hume's main ally, Garret Fitzgerald, the Irish prime minister, is in serious political trouble. Fitzgerald's coalition recently lost its overall majority in the Irish parliament and there are close observers of the Dublin scene who feel he may well be out of office by November.

Fitzgerald's sub-Thatcherite remedies have been associated with a decline in the fortunes of the Irish economy. The scourge of mass emigration is once again a major talking point. When they vote in the next general election, all the signs are that the electors will thank Fitzgerald for his 'historic achievement' in negotiating the Agreement, but reject him nonetheless, because of his economic record. (For a generation, at least, the economy and not the 'national question' has been the dominant issue in the Republic's elections.)

Fitzgerald, who has enjoyed a huge uncritical media acclaim in the UK, has anyway run out of impetus and moral authority. Always well to the right of centre on economic questions, Fitzgerald gained a certain 'progressive' image in 1981 on account of his espousal of a constitutional crusade to remove the Catholic sectarian elements from the Republic's constitution. Five years later, the Republic's constitution is *more* sectarian with the inclusion of a new prohibition on abortion and the recent massive defeat of the divorce proposal which signals the end of any further hopes of liberalisation for some years.

Equally, Fitzgerald's one other individual contribution to political debate – a commitment not to negotiate with the British over the heads of the Unionists – has been casually abandoned. It now seems possible that Charles Haughey, whose nationalism is more straightforward than that of Fitzgerald, will be Irish prime minister before Thatcher calls a British general election. Haughey and Thatcher do not get on and though Haughey will not abandon the Agreement, he will not make even minimal rhetorical concessions to Unionists either. The scene will be set for an interesting confrontation.

British strategy

Here is the conundrum for the British government. They have carefully designed an Agreement which probably can not be broken by Unionist resistance. There is no sign as yet that the Loyalists can deliver a knock out blow as they did in 1974. The Agreement has even survived severe internal disagreements with the Irish government especially over Garvahy Road. So far, so good. But the fact remains that the wider purposes which the Agreement was designed to achieve are more unattainable than ever. That section of the Tory leadership (Hurd, Howe and Chris Patten) which thought in terms of gradually detaching Northern Ireland from the UK has received a rude shock from the outcome of the Republic's divorce referendum – which is perceived in many quarters to be a vote for partition and a form of 'Rome Rule' in the South.

Those who sought primarily an internal Unionist solution (King, Thatcher and Tebbit) are, however, equally discomforted. In the early months, King could point to the electoral reverses suffered by Sinn Fein in the January elections and the emergence of the Progressive Democrats (PD) in the Republic as an apparently major modernising force – with a leader, Desmond O'Malley, who favoured the abandonment of the irredendist articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution which express a territorial claim over Northern Ireland. Now Sinn Fein's support appears to have stabilised while the 'Dessiecrats', as the PDs are known, are checked by the continued vitality of Haughey's Fianna Fail. Indeed, at the next election, the PDs may well do most damage to Garret Fitzgerald's Fine Gael party.

Tom King, Northern Ireland Secretary, who liked to lecture the Unionists on their attachment to shibboleths of the past as opposed to the relatively enlightened attitudes in the South, now finds, to his chagrin, that both parts of Ireland are equally wedded to traditionalism. His immediate reaction, now apparently passed, was to give an interview to the *Belfast Telegraph* apparently downgrading the Agreement which provoked no fewer than 18 points of protest from Dublin. In general, King, who inherited the policy from Hurd, seems to have little clue as to what to do, often leaving the running to Scott.

both parts of Ireland are equally wedded to traditionalism

Yet if the British government does not seriously reconsider its strategy the current deterioration of the Ulster environment will continue unabated; this is especially so, if future developments significantly touch the RUC ('Stalkergate') or the judiciary. If Neil Kinnock wins the next general election, he may well find that not the least of Thatcher's grim legacies is her contribution to intensifying the situation in Northern Ireland. □

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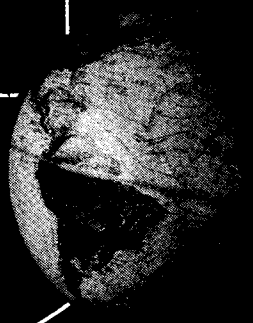

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Letters

OUT OF TOUCH

Nicola Lacey's plea for the *incorporation* of the European Convention on Human Rights into UK domestic law is confused and mistaken. It can have found a place in a journal about marxism today only to show that your columns are open to the expression of all views, including those of the extreme centre.

1. She takes as 'orthodox' the view that ministerial responsibility, parliamentary scrutiny, constitutional convention and elections adequately control governmental and multinational corporate powers. This view she now discovers to have been 'seriously undermined'.

Where was she brought up? and when? I was taught in the 1930s at the London School of Economics by people like Laski, Jennings and Robson that that orthodoxy was largely myth. More recently, has she never read Miliband and scores of other socialist writers? Or Marx? She has also discovered governmental threats to individual and community interests 'which we have tended to *take for granted*'. She may have done so. But 'we'? What does she think capitalist governments have been doing for the last 200 years?

2. So she wants a bill of rights as part of a written constitution (as Lord Hailsham and professor Hayek advocate). These, she thinks, 'might' have a real impact in securing 'the background conditions of tolerance, security and mutual respect and freedom within which other social goals may effectively be pursued'.

The jargon aside, who does she think will draft this constitution? And with what in mind? To usher in a socialist millennium?

3. The advantages she sees in incorporating the European Convention into UK law are (a) that the British courts 'have already had some experience of interpreting' the convention and (b) that there 'exists a substantial body of well-argued case law from the European court of human rights which would be a useful source of guidance for British courts'. Ho bloody Ho.

The reason UK law has been found so often to violate the convention is because our judges have interpreted UK laws to exclude individual claims to free speech etc, (as in the *Sunday Times* thalidomide case). If UK judges had to interpret the convention they would have to decide whether restrictions on free speech were 'necessary in a democratic society'.

In the 19th century world of liberal fallacy Nicola Lacey appears to inhabit, she may think they would not uphold such restrictions. My money would go the other way. But then I am only an unreformed socialist of the 1930s.

Professor John Griffiths, London

KARATE CONDEMNED

Chris Savage-King (*MT* August) argues correctly that the recent influx of magazines and films on martial arts are removed from both the original ideals and the teaching of the arts in Britain.

Yet much of her article, concerning the different styles and their teaching, is in my view wrong.

Although it does take several years of training to become adept in fighting techniques, the benefits in terms of fitness and improved self-defence ability become evident in a couple of months. And these two are the major reasons why people take up martial arts. The 'aesthetic qualities' are hardly, if at all, in the minds of beginners in judo and karate. Unlike boxing and wrestling, participants will not generally be hurt in training.

Chris also certainly seems to have it in for karate, which is condemned for being hierarchical, individualistic, macho and lacking women participants. Hierarchy in terms of proven ability seems to me preferable to one based on anything else. And there are few benefits in the karate hierarchy – the better you get the harder you're expected to work, and, I'm told, the humbler you become.

What would have been interesting in Chris's article is some analysis of the class divisions between the various styles and some statistics on participation in Britain (how many working-class people do T'ai chi?). Also some material on the many different federations of martial arts and their internal politics.

As it is, half the article is pretty subjective.

Rob Rolfe, London

REPACKAGING THE FAMILIAR

In their article on 'People Aid' (*MT* July) Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques continually stress the 'scale and ambition' of the Band Aid, Live Aid and Sport Aid events, finding in them an irresistible 'combination of culture and politics, altruism and fun' which instituted nothing less than a new political movement counterposing direct democracy to bureaucracy.

However, it isn't the audacity which is striking about these events but the extent to which they repackaged the familiar as the new: benefit records, benefit concerts and sponsored runs. The first two are the staple diet of the Left and the last is a favourite of churches with dry rot and, yes, the poverty lobby. The audacity lay in the use of scale as a marketing ploy to create excitement, an effect not unknown in bombastic rock music.

Leaving aside the authors' surprising lack of irony in their comment about 'how much it costs a star to give a free performance' on a benefit record, is it such a matter for celebration that so many people, moved, we are told, by film of the Ethiopian famine, gave money for relief work only when it was exchanged for a commodity? There was some confusion about this: people were urged to buy not one but two, three or four copies of the record, not to simply put the money in a collecting can.,

Whether or not as a conscious aim, a numerical constituency was formed out of this possible confusion. Each phase of the campaign since then has reinforced the legitimacy of Geldof's representation of a 'silent majority' allowing him a public role as plain-speaking Saint Bob.

And yet, even now, governmental agencies have made surprisingly few moves towards the limited aid objectives. That blocking of the famine movement's objectives seems to be where Hall and Jacques see its potential.

But the real limits of this 'movement' lie in the nature of participation in these events which has been spectatorial: concert spectatorship at Wembley in a celebration of mainstream rock culture; the isolated community of tv viewers; the active spectatorship of Sport Aid; the filling-in of sponsorship forms.

Hall and Jacques wish to establish a hegemonic position in relation to Sport Aid, and castigate the Left for 'depriving itself of a voice in the direction of that movement. They seem unconcerned that, in its very nature, it consisted of hardly more than 'a great swarm of anonymous runners', without the forum for anything more.

A. Dixon, Glasgow

FORGOTTEN ALLIES

In more than one of the many debates which has graced the pages of *Marxism Today* in recent months about Left realignment and the isolation of Thatcherism, there has been an acceptance (to me a correct one) not only of the Labour Left but even the Liberal Left as allies in that realignment.

What saddens me is that in over two years of readership it is impossible to recall any articles about one crucial aspect of the broad democratic alliance which *The British Road to Socialism* identifies – the campaign for national rights in Scotland and Wales.

The legacy of Thatcherism in Scotland is a Scottish realignment which is pro-assembly/anti-Tory and has a consensus position on most issues from opposing Trident, to saving Scottish steel, to ending apartheid. Public support for the national question is at an historic high, with 50% of Scots favouring a devolved assembly and 30% of Scots wanting a separate parliament. This surely warrants attention.

Of particular relevance is the fact that Plaid Cymru – an outright socialist party – have entered an alliance with the SNP – a left-of-centre party – for the next general election. They have agreed a 10-point manifesto on the basis of no deals with the Tories but conditional support for a minority Labour or Alliance government. The SNP left have made the running recently on campaigns concerning wages councils, cold climate allowance, and nuclear power in a bid to turn the pro-assembly/anti-Tory consensus into a pro-independence/anti-unionist one.

How ironic if the prospect of a future Labour government after the next election may depend upon assurances to nationalist parties whose central aim – self government for Scotland and Wales – is being so shamefully ignored by *Marxism Today* at present.

Andrew Doig, Falkirk

RACISM OR RACIALISM

The terms 'racialism' and 'racism' are sometimes used interchangeably. Therefore it is of great importance that a specific distinction is made between the two when referring to South Africa.

The term 'racism' refers to the belief that there are significant distinctions (whether moral, intellectual or cultural) between races.

Whilst 'racialism' denotes the belief not only that there are such differences, but that they provide adequate grounds for different treatment, in particular for granting rights and privileges to members of one race, whilst withholding them from members of another.

All forms of racialism are usually found under one of the following areas: prejudice, discrimination, segregation and xenophobia.

Therefore, it can be stated that South Africa is a question of 'racialism' rather than 'racism'.

David Richardson, Eastleigh

THE WRONG WORDS

Oh dear me. In two articles in one issue (both 'Constitutional Rumblings' in August *MT*), you allow your contributors to use 'emasculate' to mean 'deprive of power'.

If you must have long Latin words, why not 'eviscerate' (tear the guts out)? A bit bloodthirsty, but very graphic, and at least it doesn't equate power with male genitalia (or was that your cunning anti-patriarchal intent all along?)

Norman Trapnel, London

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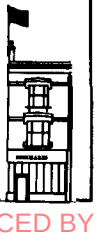

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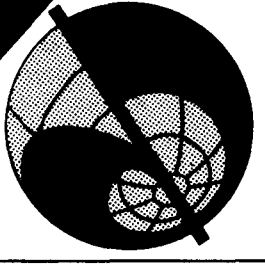

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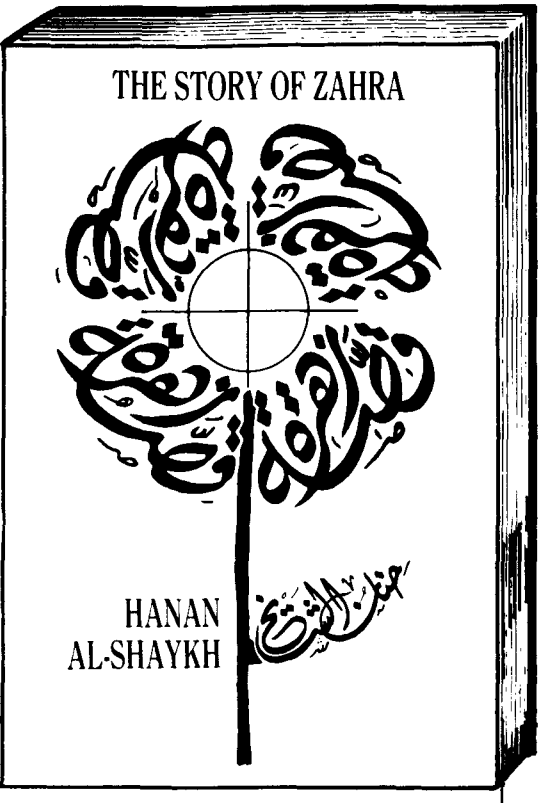

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VIEWPOINT

Politics Begins At Home

In the July issue, Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques argued that Bob Geldof and Sport Aid had succeeded where the Left had failed in making aid a major national issue. We asked Paddy Coulter from Oxfam; Michael Palmer, campaigns officer for the World Development Movement; Carl Wright, director, Commonwealth Trade Union Council; and Joan Lestor a member of the steering committee of One World, to respond.

PADDY COULTER
By-passing the Left

A new popular movement, as Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques rightly detected, has emerged under the unsuspecting nose of the Left. This was evident in last October's mass 'Fight World Poverty' lobby of parliament which derived its political impact from the very inexperience of the lobbyists. Since then the number of Oxfam's 'Hungry for Change' campaign groups has doubled to a nationwide total of nearly 300 and the number of MPs supporting the early day motion on famine prevention has swollen to a near record level – a tribute to the mailbags of constituents' letters on the issue.

Hall and Jacques are perhaps a shade too hard on the Left – there have been some trade union initiatives and earlier this year Glenys Kinnock helped launch One World specifically geared to the labour movement. But it has been Geldof and not the Left who has opened the eyes of a younger generation to the cause of internationalism. Millions have followed the transition from Band Aid's concentration solely on emergency relief through Live Aid's emphasis on longer-term development work to Sport Aid's focus on the role of governments and the wider causes of hunger.

There have, of course, been extraordinary public responses before to Third World suffering – eg, to the plight of Kampucheans in the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge. But there are two new features. Firstly the sustained nature of public interest. It looks as though African famine has successfully defied the media law of gravity which allows for a story to be built up as a disaster movie, then knocked down again on the lines of 'aid-goes-astray' and thereafter treated as 'old news'. But exactly two years after Michael Buerk's first tv reports from Ethiopia, Geldof continues to occupy headlines – and the *Daily Telegraph* creditably leads its front page with reports from its correspondent in southern Sudan.

Secondly, the crisis has been correctly perceived as not just 'out there' but something which has a direct relation to us at home. Famine has been juxtaposed with the absurdity of EEC food mountains and has brought into public question the generosity of official British aid – and not only aid but trade, debt and arms policies as Sport Aid sought to make clear.

The challenge is there (especially given the limitations of popular media in providing adequate explanations) to retain this newly receptive audience whose interest was sparked by Band/Live/Sport Aid. The development agencies are already picking it up – see War on Want's recent ad exhorting Sport Aid runners to 'take the next step' and the World Development Movement's titling of their new book *Change The World*. But the Left appears so far to be passing up the opportunity – perhaps it does not really believe that international causes can be genuinely popular any more?

MICHAEL PALMER
The party political agenda

One of the most significant comments arising out of last October's 20,000-strong mass lobby of parliament to fight world poverty was that 'for the first time, aid is on the party political agenda'. It is something which most of the traditional agencies have acknowledged as the distinctions between charity and politics have become increasingly blurred. Clearly, much of the underlying cause of developing countries' problems is rooted in political actions; *ergo*, it is going to require political solutions and a willingness by all aid agencies to address those who would be responsible for such political decisions.

But let's not kid ourselves. Sport Aid did increase that process – it mobilised millions for the day. Without it, how much

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attention would have been paid to the deliberations of the UN in New York the following week? But what now? Sport Aid is no more – rightly it has served its immediate purpose magnificently. But what is to become of the millions who ran the world and invested in Africa?

Some of those millions clearly joined because their mates were there or because it made a fun day. So it was. Others ran for traditional charitable motives – they had been moved by the reports of Michael Buerk and those who followed and, if a tenner could help, all well and good. Yet others both cared charitably and were moved politically. They understood what the agencies and the World Development Movement were telling them: thanks for what you are doing but your greatest contribution would be to persuade the British government into taking action on debt relief, on promoting small-scale agricultural production, on improving access for African goods to European markets.

And there is a long way to go. Realistically, aid by itself will never be an election-winning card. But Band Aid/Live Aid/Sport Aid and the lobby of parliament have shown that there are enough people concerned. The strength of the movement is its lack of sectarian roots – while it may have been nurtured by the adversity of the present administration, its wrath will be greater if a more sympathetic government also fails to deliver.

Sport Aid continued the process of politicising overseas aid and development. It was itself a populist phenomenon. But would Terry Wogan have given so much air time without Bob Geldof's presence? That is the challenge of the Sport Aid phenomenon – to ensure aid emerges from its Channel 4/*Guardian* ghetto.

CARL WRIGHT
Labour Aid

It is quite right to assume that the Band/Live/Sport Aid phenomenon challenges the underlying assumptions of Thatcherite political dogma. It has also mobilised popular feeling in a way no other mass movements have done.

That this should happen at a time of growing concern about Third World issues is a credit to Bob Geldof and the idealism he has generated. It is equally a sad commentary on the failure of the labour movement to put itself at the head of the new youth culture and growing internationalist feeling.

The record of the Labour party and the trade union movement on international issues is not a bad one. The labour movement has strongly supported a fairer deal for the Third World and has been leading the fight on key political issues like Chile, South Africa and Nicaragua. This contrasts with the Conservatives' mean-spirited and ideologically blinkered policies and the Alliance's woolly 'good-doer' approach, incapable of tackling the real economic problems.

The trade unions too, have been engaged in practical solidarity work. This has been strengthened with the establishment of the Commonwealth Trade Union Council (CTUC) in 1979, which assists Third World unions and encourages self-reliance, operating on a strict non-aligned policy.

What the labour movement has failed to do is to fire the imagination of their members and of the wider public. Their case for a fairer world order has therefore largely gone by default. As a result the racist poison of much of the mass media – most recently demonstrated over the Commonwealth Games' boycott – has been allowed to condition public responses.

There are now signs that the labour movement is waking up to the challenge. The Labour party will soon be releasing a major policy document on international aid and cooperation which will put it firmly in the vanguard on Third World development. The TUC and the individual unions are also contemplating important new initiatives in response to a 1985 TUC resolution which called for the resources of some 9m trade union members to be tapped. A recent suggestion is that union members should donate an hour's pay to a 'Labour Aid' fund, and this kind of initiative will be made easier by new rules on charitable donations which come into effect in 1987.

What is needed now is an intensive education campaign to inform the membership of the issues and to motivate their support. In 1985 the CTUC and the TUC started a modest educational programme to raise the awareness of Third World issues among union activists. Within the Labour party the Labour Aid and Development committee has been trying to do the same. More recently, the One World campaign, spearheaded by Glenys Kinnock, has sought to raise significantly the profile of Labour's Third World commitment. These long-overdue initiatives must be built upon and extended to the voters and their families: it is necessary to adopt a real campaigning approach if 'Labour Aid' is to be given a genuine political commitment.

JOAN LESTOR
Out of touch

It would, of course, be foolish to pretend that the labour and trade union movement has given a high priority to Third World issues. But it is equally foolish for Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques to imply there has been no response to recent development issues particularly when a previous issue of *Marxism Today* carried a long interview with Joan Ruddock and Glenys Kinnock about the emergence of the campaigning organisation One World. Perhaps Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques will read it and then correct their comments accordingly.

The activities of One World would be impossible without the financial help and other support we have received from the trade union movement. One wonders how many union leaders the authors have discussed the campaign with or whether they are actually in touch with the thinking of many trade union leaders on this issue? We have had, or will have, a presence at trade union conferences as well as at the TUC; and the launch of One World included well known trade unionists as speakers and sponsors.

Nuclear power has clearly attracted a large number of resolutions for this years Labour party conference and this is understandable and necessary in view of recent events. Resolutions on the Third World are small in number but the requests we are receiving from all over the country are perhaps a greater indication of the interest from the movement in this area and a desire to correct the mistakes of yesteryear in not recognising the relationship between Third World issues and socialism in Britain.

As someone who, like Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, has often deplored the lack of concern and priority given to aid and development within the movement in the past, I rejoice that the contribution made by people like Judith Hart is now bearing fruit and that there has been a fundamental change in the attitude and thinking within the movement as a whole. We need to keep this interest alive, recognising our responsibilities to the Third World on the one hand, and the mutual dependence of the rich and the poor nations in the struggle for survival on the other.

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HERE WE GO . . . AGAIN!

Eugene McLaughlin and Steve Readhead

On July 16 the prime minister met representatives of English soccer to assess the state of the year-long war against hooliganism in the aftermath of the Brussels tragedy last year. The Football Association (FA), Football League (FL) and the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) officials in attendance reported that they were satisfied that the emergency measures – alcohol bans, closed circuit tv cameras, family enclosures and membership card schemes – were working. The reinstatement of the good name of English soccer was all but complete as far as they were concerned.

Heysel and the other well publicised events of the 1984-5 season were fast receding into the mists of popular memory, or were being conveniently forgotten. An air of smugness pervaded the soccer scene as the authorities looked forward to the final stage of the sports' resurrection – the return of English clubs to European competition. But now with the return of English soccer hooliganism to the headlines, with the disturbances involving fans travelling to Holland for pre-season friendlies, the game is well and truly up. The chances of the proscription ban on English clubs being lifted in the near future are now in Ted Croker's words 'virtually nil'.

The European ban has already been financially costly to the top English clubs who have been previously successful in these prestigious competitions. Gary Lineker, for instance, has given the chance of playing top-class European matches against defences who employ a sweeper, as one of his reasons for leaving Everton to join Barcelona. Hence top priority has been given to getting back into Europe. However, this means showing the European football authorities that English soccer has put its house back in order.

What has actually happened is that we have witnessed the reverse of the moral panic of the 1984-5 season when the style wars of the casual firms finally spilled over into our living rooms. Although fans in designer sportswear have been gathering in numbers in football grounds since the late 1970s, it was only last year that the media really caught on to the sartorial changes in British soccer and, in particular, the fact that the hardest gangs were often those who were most expensively and stylishly dressed. However, little was heard of soccer hooliganism during the past season when televised coverage was off the air until January.

The Handsworth and Tottenham riots, Wapping and the hippy convoy have replaced the exploits of soccer's service crews in the media. On the basis that no news is good news we have been led to believe that another 'enemy within' has been vanquished by the decisive action of the prime minister. However, if we forget the rhetoric of Thatcher and the seige mentality of the media it is obvious from recent incidents that the tendencies that culminated in Heysel are still present.

In Mexico NF-emblazoned Union Jacks were present and imperialist fantasies were much in evidence when England played Argentina – (Lineker strikes faster than an Exocet).

But it wasn't just the fans who displayed their jingoism. The commentators referred to 'Dago' Maradona and the 'Argies'. This was the Falklands part II except the Argentinian soccer team was vastly superior to their military forces. They won but only because – naturally – they cheated through Maradona handling the ball past Shilton – English chivalry against South American trickery!

There were no major disturbances involving English fans although skirmishes did take place. However, the finals were in Mexico – what would have happened if a European country had played host is anyone's guess.

We can only speculate what may take place in the course of the 1988 European championships when England fans will have to contend with the various 'admir-

photo: Associated Press

Hooliganism: tv coverage now frequently plays down what is happening on the terraces and seating areas by framing only the pitch and making sure that the microphones do not pick up too many offensive chants.

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ing' continental crews wanting 'to have a go'. For example, West German clubs have their own fighting factions who model themselves upon their British counterparts. Union Jacks with German team names can be seen and Brit style chants can be heard on the terraces. Will the old refrain, 'You're gonna get your fucking 'eads kicked in' be heard across Europe again?

On the home front the regional rivalries still exist and the respective crews are continually competing for top spot. Arsenal are reputedly the leading crew in London at the moment in terms of both style and hardness, though that league table is forever changing! Clashes *have* occurred before, during and after matches periodically throughout the 1985-6 season.

During the second week of July a young fan died as the result of clashes between Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield fans and earlier in the season a Millwall fan was stabbed to death returning from an away match. Wigan Athletic have recently banned all away fans from their ground because of continued trouble. As always Celtic/Rangers rivalries and their spin-offs are significant, although in Scotland style leadership lies elsewhere. Chelsea and Rangers confirmed their NF/Orange friendship by meeting up when Chelsea played 'catholic' Everton at Goodison last season. Rangers and Celtic have both visited London this summer to play Spurs and Arsenal respectively. Celtic and Arsenal fans have a similar basis for friendship (Irish 'catholic') but Rangers and 'Jewish' Spurs was a pairing almost guaranteed to flare up.

The series of proposals aimed at stamping out the hooligan element have had no visible impact upon the behaviour of those fans, other than to further displace the trouble:

- The membership card scheme has been a virtual non starter, being too difficult and expensive to operate.
- Family enclosures are not the place to locate the fighting crews as they would never attend matches as part of a 'family unit'.
- Alcohol bans have missed the point – you can't look after yourself if you are 'pissed up' – even though further controls are planned.
- The closed circuit televisions and video cameras primarily focus upon the terraces when many clashes have occurred in the seating areas.
- The police mainly spend their time, if they intervene at all, ejecting people from grounds for shouting and swearing, not for violent conduct.

Of course all of these measures are confined to incidents inside the ground when in fact most of the serious trouble increasingly occurs before and after matches, well away from the stadium.

By for once underestimating the seriousness of football hooliganism, the media, police and politicians of all parties are unwittingly playing a part in a post-Heysel cover-up. Television coverage of football in England now frequently plays down what is happening on the terraces and seating areas by framing only the pitch and making sure that the microphones do not pick up too many of the offensive chants. It was only because violence began to infringe upon the pitch during televised matches that the cameras could no longer ignore it.

This policy of concentrating on the playing area alone has fuelled the complacency of all concerned with the war against hooliganism – out of sight, out of mind! However, the reality is that soccer's style wars continued during the 1985-6 season and will do so as long as the crews, in their latest gear, are prepared to fight. If such incidents do make the headlines again it will be a reminder that neither Mr Justice Popplewell or Thatcher have solved the problem of football hooliganism.

In a wider context hooliganism is just one of the persistent problems that soccer will have to contend with this season. Only the elite of top clubs are safe from the prospect of severe financial difficulties. The rest, to varying degrees, will have to face the continued decline in numbers attending matches, proposed amalgamations, take-overs and, for some, inevitable bankruptcy. Players will have to put up with much stricter discipline (Charlie Nicholas has been told to remove his earring by his manager) and lower wage levels being imposed and supporters will have to endure the comparatively mediocre standards of English soccer.

Despite Lineker's 'golden boots' award, the 1986 world cup confirmed the relative decline of English football at international level. The best of League soccer over the last 20 years has been largely achieved because of the excellence of Welsh, Irish and Scottish players plus the skills of Argentinian, Dutchmen and others. More significantly still, the style of English soccer has been renewed through the signing of so many black British players by League clubs. Though earlier suggestions of an all-black England team by 1990 now look over-simplistic, Bobby Robson would do well to remember that only when John Barnes came on as substitute in the Azteca stadium did England look capable of taking on Maradona and Argentina.

CHANGING FACE

Brian McNair

For many years, and with undoubted justification, the Soviet Union has complained that the coverage it has received in the capitalist media has been biased and distorted. But there was a reluctance to concede that some of the blame for this could be attributed to the Soviet way of handling information, both in dealings with the foreign press and within Soviet society itself.

Recently, however, all that has changed. The Soviets have been learning the rules of the propaganda war as the Western media like to play it, transforming their information policy into an instrument which works for, rather than against them. In doing so they are finding greater success in competing with the slick public relations approach of Western governments, and the Reagan administration in particular. On specific issues the Soviet point of view is being more successfully presented in the world as a whole, and in general the Soviet image has improved.

These developments cannot be put down either to the increasingly obvious stalling tactics of the leading NATO countries on disarmament and East-West

Self criticism: a Soviet government statement is read out on tv as part of a conscious policy to give more information to the population.

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issues, nor to a change in the general attitude of the Western journalists who cover Soviet affairs. These may be factors, but of greater importance is the simple fact that now as never before the Soviets are playing the game of news management and finding, perhaps to their surprise, that they are quite good at it.

Some observers date the origins of this new policy to the Korean Airline crisis of September 1983 – the first such crisis, according to some Soviet sources, in which Mikhail Gorbachev took personal control of news management. While the first week following the tragedy illustrated clearly what had until then been Soviet information policy at such moments – say nothing, and if you must say something, say as little as possible – the major news conference given by the military in Moscow on September 9 can be seen as ushering in a new era for Soviet public relations.

Using maps and detailed evidence to show why, in their view, the incident had been a tragic mistake caused by the spying activities of the USA, the news conference saw the Soviets come out of the closet in a public relations sense. For the first time, they demonstrated their belief in the validity of their own case by putting it to the world public.

This new approach to information was only one aspect of a whole range of radical ideas and policies, sponsored first by Andropov, and then after the death of Chernenko, by Gorbachev and his supporters. The new information policy was developed further at the April plenum of 1985, which formulated the concept of *shirokaya glasnost* – 'broad publicity' – and was subsequently endorsed at the 27th congress.

The party's call for more 'publicity' was largely a call for frankness and sincerity in the news media, publicity for the bad as well as the good in Soviet society, for more and better information on all aspects of party policy. In the propaganda battle with the West, this gave the green light to the idea of dealing with the capitalist media on its own terms: feeding information rather than denying it, satisfying the journalists' need for news and 'scoops', and presenting the party's position in a manner attractive to the Western audience.

'We had argued for this for a long time', says one of the media specialists at Moscow's USA-Canada Institute, and there is no doubt that the influence of the 'Americanists' such as Georgi Arbatov, director of the USA-Canada Institute and a leading adviser to Gorbachev, was instrumental in promoting the new line.

photo: Camera Press

New image: Mikhail Gorbachev has taken personal control of news management.

To put the policy into practice Vladimir Lomeiko was appointed head of the press department at the foreign ministry on Smolensky Square. Having worked as a journalist in Bonn he knew what Western journalists wanted and he proceeded to give them just that. He introduced weekly press briefings for the Western correspondents in Moscow.

The briefings were, and remain, on the record, which mean that the Soviet officials who speak at them could be freely quoted. By contrast, the weekly press briefings given by the American Embassy in Moscow are off-the-record and are thus, from the Western correspondents' point of view, less attractive as news sources. In true Reagan style, the Soviet news briefings were even timed to catch the prime-time American tv audience.

At the Reagan-Gorbachev summit the Soviet press corps arrived a week before the Americans. Daily press conferences and briefings were laid on, top experts and military people made available. And at the end of it all, before a world press hungry for information, Gorbachev himself gave a two hour live press conference, ensuring that his version of events dominated the imediate post-summit period. Not only had the Soviet publicity machine improved its performance beyond all recognition, it had overtaken the Americans in slickness and professionalism.

Gorbachev's personal role in this transformation cannot be overestimated. If the policy of *glasnost* took shape after many years of debate, Gorbachev's personal touch gave it meaning. Martin Walker, *The Guardian*'s correspondent in Moscow, put it this way:

> 'Senior Soviet officials are very frank about the sense of shame they felt at the succession of elderly invalids in the Kremlin. They couldn't read a speech without losing their way, couldn't stand without being helped. Now they think they've got a reasonably attractive, energetic, modern younger leader, and that changes are coming. . . they are learning the ropes of the modern media age, and to understand that you just have to see how Gorbachev appears on tv. There's never been a Soviet leader like him in his sense of relaxation and readiness.'

Then, however, came Chernobyl – not just an economic and human tragedy for the Soviet Union, but the first major test for the party's new infromation policy.

Up until this point it was mainly the economic and social policies of previous leaders, dead or retired, which had been criticised. Shoddy workmanship, bad management, excessive bureaucracy and other relatively non-controversial problems had been exposed. But would the party break with tradition and authorise 'broad publicity' on an incident so current and topical, so fraught with political implications as that which erupted at Chernobyl?

Initially, it appeared that *glasnost* had

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not survived the trauma of Chernobyl. A major nuclear disaster, which occurred in the early hours of Saturday, April 26, was not announced until the evening of Monday, April 28, and only after the Swedes had called the Soviet state committee for safety at nuclear power stations to demand an explanation for the unusually high level of radiation being detected on their territory. (To be told – 'we don't know anything about it').

What came on April 28 – a sparse three-line statement giving no hint of the seriousness of the incident – satisfied no-one and only fuelled the Western propaganda machine already moving into gear. There was in fact no news coverage of Chernobyl in the Soviet media until May 6, 10 days after the accident.

It *was* reported that Western propagandists were stirring up a campaign of hysteria and anti-Sovietism; that nuclear incidents were frequent occurrences, especially in the West; and that everything was completely normal in Kiev, Minsk and other cities (although hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated from Kiev a few days later). Of the disaster itself, only bland government statements that 'work was continuing to liquidate the effects' appeared.

In short, an information vacuum was created. And as always happens in such cases, it was filled with rumour and speculation. 2,000 were dead according to one report filed by a naive young correspondent on the strength of an anonymous phone call from Kiev; hospitals full of dead and dying according to *The Times*' account of a statement by the Scottish student Rhona Branson. And so it went on, for the first 10 days or so – 'the old-style bureaucratism and inertia', as one senior journalist conceded, had again taken hold of the Soviet public relations' machine. The Western media again had a field day.

On May 6 however, the policy of 'broad publicity' began to reassert itself. *Pravda* correspondents that morning reported from the scene of the disaster on the events of April 26 and the subsequent evacuation. The most important news conference ever given by the Soviets was held in the afternoon at the foreign ministry, giving the first adequate account of what had happened. From that point on the information flowed, to the extent that one British journalist characterised it as 'a watershed in Soviet information policy'.

Not only was the information freely given by the Soviets about Chernobyl after May 6 unprecedented in its quantity and quality, but it appeared alongside criticism of Communist party workers who had failed to fulfil their duties at the crucial moment. One official in the town of Pripyat, it was reported, had been expelled, another demoted to candidate membership of the party, another given a severe reprimand. Furthermore, the Soviet media themselves came in for criticism, on precisely the grounds that they had failed to report the incident with sufficient speed and objectivity. In *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of June 4, special correspondent Yuri Sherbak noted that one of the main lessons of Chernobyl had been taught by the mass media. The accident had shown that:

> 'A few of them still haven't reshaped their work in the spirit of the decisions of the 27th congress. I am speaking about the quantity *and* quality of information. After several days when information was extremely miserly, a few publications and telebroadcasts displayed a falsely-optimistic and complacent note, as if they were not reporting a great tragedy but academic anxieties or a firemen's exercise'.

Self-criticism of this kind confirms that the spirit of publicity survived and indeed benefited from the misfortune of Chernobyl. As to the reasons for the initial information vacuum, they can only be guessed at. As one journalist put it: 'the political history of Chernobyl may in the end be more interesting than the technical history'.

As for the future, the Soviets will continue to play the international propaganda game with skill and confidence, genuinely believing that in the contemporary world they are increasingly coming to be seen as 'the good guys' *vis à vis* the Americans. Stanislav Kondrashev, senior political commentator for *Isvestia*, insists that 'It's a permanent change. It's the result of a conscious decision to give more information, both to our own people and to the West. The slogan of broad publicity is being put into practice.' The benefits of this new strategy are two fold. On the one hand it helps those journalists who aspire to objectivity in reporting the Soviet case by providing them with better material. On the other it makes the Soviet Union a more attractive place to report for news-hungry Western media.

ME AND MY FLOPPY

Jim Hawkins

Among the many unfortunate phrases invented by the less than poetic computer industry 'word processing' has a special place. It evokes mental pictures of mechanisms that churn hoppers full of language, remove fibre, add E101 and Monosodium Glutamate, and heat-seal the final soulless product.

Six or seven years ago very few writers processed words, they merely wrote them. Now any gathering of writers is likely to spend less time moaning about traditional

cartoon: Nick Newman

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gripes and more discussing Wordstar versus PC-Write, Near Letter Quality printers versus Daisywheels and 'Do you really need a hard disk?'

In 1979 I was writing a 13 part series for tv. My electric typewriter was shaking itself to bits and chewing up expensive ribbons by the handful. I was using so much Tippex the scripts looked like a do-it-yourself plastering manual.

So I went out and bought an Apple computer and a cheap and nasty printer. After about a week of playing Space Invaders I got down to 'processing' some words on it. It seemed like magic. For one thing, gone was the ear-splitting whine and hammering of the typewriter. A strange silence prevailed. Sections could be moved around in the play without the intervention of scissors and staples. Sentences could be removed from a paragraph and the paragraph shuffled itself about and erased all traces of surgery.

Writer friends, knowing that I am an addict of gadgets, came to scoff and stayed to play. Playwright Brian Clark (*Whose Life is it Anyway*, *The Petition*) took all of three minutes to decide he must have one because he knew how long alterations take to incorporate into scripts. Alterations, we mused, are the key to the whole thing. If first drafts were always perfect, a piece of rock and a chisel would be adequate tools for writing.

A week later Brian Clark had his own Apple. Here I learned the bad news about being one step further along the 'wp' road. We used to have long phone calls about life, politics, and being stuck on page 19. From the day Brian's computer arrived the calls became more frequent, stopped being about life, and took the following form: 'Jim, we've got this thing on the screen that says "File Not Found". What does that mean?' 'It means it can't find the file'. 'Why not?' 'Maybe you called it something else.' 'We didn't.' 'Maybe it's on another disk.' 'Which disk?'

About an hour would pass while I processed a few more words, then the phone would ring again. Over a year I became an expert at telephone diagnosis. I could close my eyes and see the other monitor. Other friends, inspired by the success of this wp hotline service, bought themselves computers and threw away the manuals. I bought an answering machine and hid behind it. What the computer kids would call a 'buffer' between me and the phone.

One fact that emerged clearly for all of us was that conventional editing programmes are fine for letters, articles and novels, but behave less well when they 'process' plays. They do not understand the peculiarities of dialogue layout. They stick character names on the bottom of one page and what they say on the top of the next (technical term: widows and orphans). I learned to programme and wrote a system called 'Playshape', that does automatic scene numbering and other useful things and will not allow widows to lose their orphans. . . Unfortunately, the second Playshape arrived on the floppy disks of the hotline literati, they began to think of all the things it did not do. 'I'm writing a musical and the lyrics get split up across the page breaks. Can you teach it about lyrics?' Two all-nighters later it knew about lyrics.

Hull playwright Alan Plater came and decided that he was, and always would be, a typewriter man. But fellow writer Anthony Minghella could see the advantages, although he felt that the thing would be a barrier between him and the writing. But things have moved on. Nine months ago, Anthony decided to give it a go. We went out shopping for a system small enough to fit on his desk. He vowed he would never ring me up about it. He hasn't. He has established a relationship with the computer, as all writers do with the tools they use. He now says: 'I couldn't bear to be parted from it. I wouldn't want to write any other way. I'm so familiar with it now it vanishes and leaves me to think about what I'm writing. And it is so easy to make alterations and improvements there is no excuse for not doing them.'

That is the key to it. Any mechanism for getting thoughts down on paper is bound to be imperfect, bound to impose mechanical constraints. But having thought, there are many other practical things that are required of writers: clearly typed text, numbered pages, numbered scenes, legible second, third or fourth drafts. Of course, 'word processing' has nothing to do with the quality of writing, just as a potter's wheel has nothing to do with the quality of the pot.

Chisels, pens, rubbers, ink, typewriters, dictionaries, paper, and even computers, are just writers' tools. None of them think for you. Slowly the idea that a computer is a sorcerer's apprentice that intervenes and thinks for itself is dying. Computers are becoming boring, like typewriters. And that is good, because it throws the emphasis back on to the quality of what is produced, not the means of production.

Incidentally, I claim copyright on a new excuse for not meeting a deadline: it's in my word processor but I can't get it out.

ONE WOMAN'S STORY

Interview with Olivia O'Leary

Olivia O'Leary was the first woman to become senior presenter of BBC 2's *Newsnight*. She comes from Ireland, and until joining the BBC, worked there as a journalist in both print and broadcasting. She was the first woman news interviewer on Irish radio, a parliamentary sketch writer for the *Irish Times*, then presented *Today Tonight*, the Irish equivalent of *Newsnight*, before she was wooed by the BBC. She has commuted between London and Dublin, but has chosen recently to return to Ireland to work, leaving *Newsnight*, because she couldn't stand her three year old daughter crying every time she left home. Here she talks to Scarlett MccGuire.

It must have been very flattering when the BBC first approached you to do Newsnight.

It was very nice. I was fronting *Today Tonight* and in that period there were three elections in Ireland. It was a very exciting time, there was constant contact with the BBC and I did an awful lot of punditry on *The World at One*, *PM* and even *Newsnight*: commenting on elections or what had happened. So we had that sort of contact.

Linda Alexander had left in 1984 and they asked me to replace her. When I first came I found that the work was a bit restricted: news bulletins and the odd interview. I'm not good on featurette-type stories. I'm a hard news woman. It's not a question of not liking to do them, I'm just not any good and so after about six weeks I told them I was unhappy and went back to Ireland.

Then they rang me and asked if I was interested in coming back. I said not unless I was going to do the main presenter end of the programme. So when John Tusa was to

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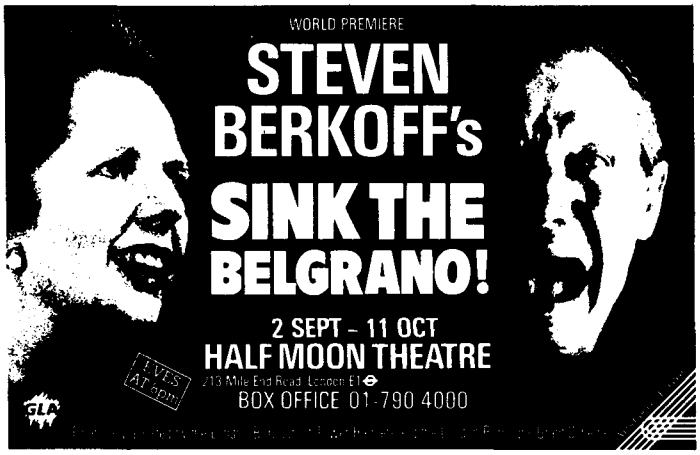

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take the summer off they asked if I would stand in; I was delighted because I thought I had stood on a point of principle. I admire the BBC for their bravery. People sometimes think of the institution as an old stick-in-the-mud, and they can be a bit sniffy about things, but they took on a relatively unknown Irish woman and I've always had great admiration for them for taking that risk.

How challenging do you find presenting Newsnight?

Enormously challenging. This programme is a Rolls Royce of a programme for a main presenter. Everything is geared towards the main presenter, all the research, all the help, all the exposure – and all the responsibility of getting it wrong too. But if you're that sort of person you're going to like that sort of exposure anyway. You do everything at *Newsnight*, you may end up doing three or four stories, three or four discussions or interviews. It's wonderful, it's a whole experience live on air. There's no other programme that makes the adrenalin flow quite like that for me.

Newsnight *has its own definition of news; it doesn't follow the pack. How do you feel it achieves this?*

We will always be looking for a story which will carry a discussion and exposition, we're not going to go for a beautiful picture story or a purely narrative story: we're looking for a story which needs analysis, which needs teasing out, which means you have to choose a particular story even if there is a more sensational one to be done. We're not merely into reporting, so it's important we choose something we can get our teeth into. The reason why our choices are sometimes different from other people's is that we need to choose an item which will carry a 20-25 minute exposition – that means you've got to go for the meatier story, and we usually do.

How much influence do you have on the programme?

Probably as the year has progressed I've become a great deal more confident about my opinions on the way something should be treated, and more confident particularly about British politics. Politics is my area. I am fascinated by parliamentary politics. I'm from a country which talks, eats and drinks, very much drinks, politics. Politics in Ireland is pub talk, kids talk about it in playgrounds, everybody talks about politics. It's a punters game in Ireland. It's like racing: people bet on it, people follow teams. Therefore it's not the slightly removed thing that it sometimes is in this country.

Olivia O'Leary: as a woman presenter she doesn't trade on her femininity. She believes that serious current affairs 'can never be flirtatious'.

As the year has gone on here I've become more confident and more influential. But it would be ridiculous to say that I have had the same editorial stamp on the programme as John Tusa who was with it from the beginning. My big thing is to turn to people and say that's fine but it's not my style. I want to write it in a particular way or I want to treat the interview in a particular way because it would be false for me to do it any other way and it must always be comfortable in my hands.

What about the reporting of Ireland?

I find that I'm sometimes having to say, 'remember that for people in the South of Ireland there are certain sensitivities in this story'. Often the BBC, when talking about Northern Ireland, will say 'province or Ulster'; Catholics in Northern Ireland would never say those words unless they were talking about the RUC. There are phrases that are acceptable to both sides: both Protestants and Catholics say Northern Ireland so that Northern Ireland for broadcasters is a phrase that doesn't carry a connotation either of being a Unionist phrase or of being a nationalist phrase, so it's the right phrase to use. It's one of my little hobby horses.

Newsnight is pretty good on Ireland. It is never ever dismissive and never does the, 'Oh God damn them, let them all sort it out together' approach. It is very conscious that Northern Ireland is living with a part of Britain's history – a part of its history Britain doesn't have to live with any more. It never tries to dismiss the contradictions or complications in an issue because it knows historically why they are there and it knows they are inherent in Northern Ireland in the same way they are inherent in the Middle East.

There may be many people on the programme who believe there should be an integrated Northern Ireland, there are many who believe there should be a United Ireland, but they do not dismiss, they do not make light of the contradictions there.

One of the things which is so significant about you is that as a woman presenter you don't trade on your femininity and you are seen as a different sort of woman to those usually found fronting tv programmes.

Serious current affairs can never be apologetic, it can never be flirtatious, and I don't think I've ever been that sort of person anyway. The very nature and content of the work you're doing means you can't, in anyway, be deferential or flirtatious with an interviewee because you are having to demand answers to questions. I can't say I ever felt it was my career in life to be a pretty woman. I don't think that nature ever endowed me with that so therefore I was never burdened with it.

Anna Ford talked about body fascism in the 1970s. Do you think you have changed things for women coming up behind you?

Anna Ford dared to say that the BBC didn't take women seriously, that programmes like *Panorama* and *Newsnight* didn't give any access to women. But there isn't just me presenting *Newsnight*, there is also Jenni Murray, and two of the four editors of the day are women. There comes a point when women have to stop shooting off their mouth about opportunities and actually look at the facts. It should be better but that kind of talk is ridiculous.

The Monica Simms report on the position of

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women in the BBC was quite disturbing about how women failed to make it to the top grades.

We have to ask whether women end up in that position because they are so grateful to have those jobs that tearing up the promotional ladder is not the first thing on their minds – We haven't begun to think in terms of 'eye on the main chance'. It maybe true that in a hierarchical institution like the BBC there is a tendency to see men as future editors of programmes, future boys to be watched.

On this programme I am as likely to have a woman as editor for the day as I am to have a man. The only difference in working with either of them is the difference between working with another woman or dealing with a man. There is a sisterly feeling about dealing with another woman, one can deal without confrontation. We can discuss something in a friendly way, there isn't the need always to have this great adverserial confrontation where both sides enjoy the sound of their own voice and impress one another with their grasp of the situation. Apart from the man's pinstriped presentation of his own case and the woman's practical presentation, there isn't any feeling that one is any better than the other.

Women have got to stop being frightened of doing hard news. I've seen again and again that women will suddenly baulk at a fence. It's partly conditioning, it's partly expectations. I've had to push my way past people who've said, 'now you won't want to go to Belfast' and I've said 'I'd love to go to Belfast'. I was asked to go to El Salvador when El Salvador wasn't a very nice place to go to and I remember feeling errr, I think I would rather go on my summer holiday. . . But you have to gird your loins and say 'I want to do that story'.

Sometimes women deliberately have to seek out the harder jobs, but you get a thousand-fold return. You then get a reputation as the woman who has done those sort of jobs and consequently you're always chosen for them. The first few barricades occur when you don't have a reputation. You have to get the bit between your teeth and insist on being allowed into areas that have always been male dominated.

Yet you are leaving Newsnight *because the juggling between your job and your family has become too difficult – a classic woman's dilemma.*

I am but I am not leaving work. I'm going back to do a very important programme on Irish tv. Yeah, I'm taking a career decision that if I were single I would not be taking. If I were single I would be staying on here. I love this programme.

My husband's in Ireland, he decided not to move. The little one is suddenly asking: 'Mummy do you have to go to England? Why weren't you here yesterday morning?' She's suddenly big enough to know that I'm gone and to miss me, and in the end that is more important. It's the choice I have to make. You take on the responsibility of a husband and child and every so often you've got to face up to that.

I don't think the decision is just because I'm a woman, I think men often have to take decisions for their families.

But they often don't.

They often don't and in this instance I suppose one could say it's the classic situation of a wife deciding to keep her family happy.

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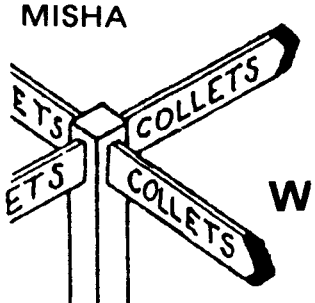

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Women's Own Culture

Losing Out: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls
Sue Lees
Hutchinson 1986 £5.95 pbk.

'The war of the sexes' they used to call it, in the late 60s when feminists were starting to come out of the undergrowth. But relations between men and women today sometimes seem more like an occupation, one population living under a dictatorial yet intimate daily oppression by another.

For women it is the experience of being a second-rate kind of citizen with circumscribed freedoms, continually forced to refer to the ruling authority. It is having random identity checks on the street, being at the mercy of arbitrary abuse from any male of the lower ranks, knowing he will be exonerated by membership of the occupying forces.

And as in any occupation we have to fraternise with them – even marry them, for heaven's sakes – in order to have a pass-card to a half-decent life. There, however, the analogy ends. Because we are of course so tied up in the culture of patriarchy that we perpetuate it among ourselves. In Sue Lees' account of the lives of London teenage girls there is little evidence of a resistance movement.

Losing Out is based on interviews and group discussions with 100 girls of 15 and 16 in three comprehensive schools. It is a welcome addition to the relatively new genre of ethnographic studies of young women, helping to correct the balance tipped so heavily in favour of boys with a stream of studies by men of the street culture of 'the lads'. The trouble with those was that, though we had some privileged insights into the occupying troops at play, we only saw the other half of the population through their eyes. Girls were commented on, in passing, mainly by reference to their component parts.

The suggestion in Sue Lee's book is that in adolescence, when males do not have the economic and political advantage they acquire in adult life, it is at the level of culture that the dirty work is carried on. Boys typify girls as either slag or drag. 'If you don't like them', as one girl puts it, 'then they'll call you a tight bitch. If you go with them they'll call you a slag afterwards.'

However to get the abusive designation of 'slag' a girl does not really need to be promiscuous. Anyone can label her, and there is no way she can prove her 'innocence'. Boys are in control of the information – did she or didn't she? – and they have the power to make a label stick, whether it is true or false. Reputation matters so much to girls, in a situation where they have little else, that it is the main cause of fights between them.

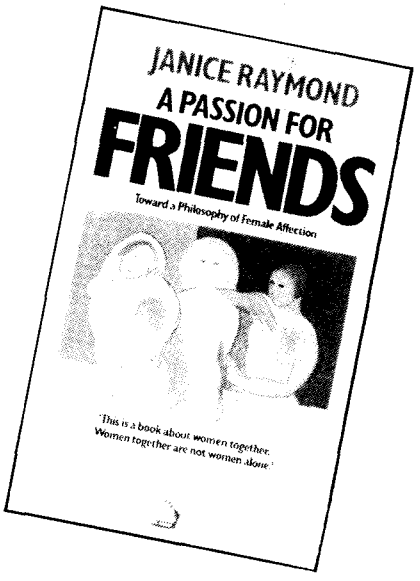
Double standard seems an understatement. Boys' respect for each other depends on pulling birds. Girls' reputations seem unwinnable – vulnerable both to being desired by boys and neglected by them. The ideology has an important outcome: it ties girls into steady relationships with boyfriends and ultimately into marriage. That is the only safe place – safe for reputations, safe against random abuse by passing males, and safe for an expression of your own sexuality. We all know, however, just what a dangerous place marriage turns out to be: who will protect us from our protector?

This all sounds very desperate, and unfortunately Sue Lees is not the only one to tell such a story. It sometimes seems that the relationship between the sexes has never been worse than it is among today's adolescents. Worse in the sense that so little real communication takes place and so few values can be shared.

Two things are missing from Sue Lees' account, however. One is an insight into what actually goes on between girl and boy behind closed doors. Qualitative research, be it ever so gently probing, cannot hear the pillow talk. Men exhaust and frighten each other, as well as women. When they dare to admit it, they want something that women's own world and women's friendships seem to offer. The trouble is that the quite ridiculously baroque form that masculinity takes in our man-made world deforms women's own culture, spoiling it for us and them.

The second thing one misses here is a sense that young women are in fact economically, legally and psychically better off today than they were. The very rawness of the conflict may be in itself a kind of fightback, a renegotiation of the relationship between young women and young men now that different, separate and unequal roles are no longer altogether taken for granted.

Cynthia Cockburn


JANICE RAYMOND
A PASSION FOR
FRIENDS
Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection
'This is a book about women together. Women together are not women alone.'

Only Half the Story

A Passion for Friends
Janice Raymond
The Women's Press £5.95 pbk

This book is both a philosophical treatise and a manifesto. It is subtitled 'Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection' and maintains a strongly polemical argument throughout. Its main thesis is that friendship between women has been historically ignored, distorted, indeed 'dismembered', because of the prime legitimation societies have given to the relationships of men and women and, importantly, men and men.

Janice Raymond's aim is therefore both to recover 'part of the history and vitality of women's friendships' with particular case studies and 'to speculate about the power of friendship in women's lives' in order to expand the range of feminist theory 'beyond women's subordinate relations to men to include women's sustaining relations with women.'

From this standpoint she is particularly concerned with examining and reworking definitions and introducing new vocabularies. Some key terms that she coins are: *gyn/affection*, to indicate the crucial con-

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nection between feminism and female friendship and meaning 'personal and political movements of women towards each other'; *hetero-relations*, which refers to all male-female relations ordained by men and to the sort of 'world' thereby created which she calls *hetero-reality*.

In such a schema, *gyn/affection* is clearly the loser. Hence Janice Raymond's insistence on recovering from history such examples of all-women communities as the Chinese marriage resisters and Christian nuns. These case studies form the main bulk of the book and make an important contribution to the work of redefinition as she examines the women-hating responses female friendship has evoked from men.

In particular, she looks at the implications of male anger suggested in the term 'loose women' and shows how, as other radical feminist work has demonstrated with terms like 'spinster' and 'virgin', it actually has positive, women-centred connotations and has indicated failure and disgrace because of the predominance of a 'hetero-real' vision.

The concluding part of the book introduces a number of criteria for making friendship between women a positive, 'empowering' and happy choice and not merely a means of escape from men. These criteria include reworkings of unfashionable terms like discernment, rationality, privacy, moral judgement and thoughtfulness which, Janice Raymond argues, actually promote passion, not diminish it, and they are issued against the grain of what she sees as certain sloppy and sentimental tendencies in the women's movement that highlight the confession and experience of 'feelings' at all costs.

I'm always powerfully persuaded by radical feminist theory and found this book saying what I'm always wanting to hear: about the wonderfulness of women in situations that are far from women-centred. But I'm once more brought up against a central area of bafflement: the problem of what might be called in this case, *hetero/affection*. Or in other words, why should women ever have anything at all to do with men?

To this question, radical feminists have tended to reply, either, this is not our problem, because our project is to be *for* women and establish women-centred cultures and traditions, not constantly displace our energies in 'going back to' or 'drawing attention to' men again.

Or there has been an acknowledgement that much of the strength of radical feminist theory has, precisely, been its emphasis on patriarchy and its constant and necessary reminders of the power of men, so that any relationship women have with men is explained primarily in terms of men's overwhelmingly greater economic and physical powers over women.

Both positions are implied in Janice Raymond's book and, as she sees any man-woman relationship as basically coercive, to suggest any possibility of hetero/affection would surely mean for her something like 'false consciousness' whereby women have somehow misrecognised their feelings for men as 'love' or 'friendship'.

But without wishing to detract one jot from what radical feminists have said about the sheer and literal bloody awfulness of men in all societies, this cannot be the whole story about patriarchy. In a sense, it would be easier for feminist theory if it were. But any adequate explanation of why the potential and power of women together has been so constantly undermined will have to confront not only the oppressive awfulness of men but whatever constitutes their attractiveness to women as well.

Rosalind Brunt

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CONFERENCES

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Greetings to TUC 1986

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Wednesday Sept. 17th Pete Carter on the New Realism After the T.U.C.
Wednesday Oct. 29th Dave Priscott on the Re-alignment of the Left after the Labour Party Conference.

Jackson's Lane Community Centre, Archway Road by Highgate Tube. 8pm.

Sunday Sept. 28th Commemmoration Lecture on Spain. Plus Exhibition. Lecture by Margot Heinemann.

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Update

NEWS

1987 European Poetry Translation Prize will be awarded for a collection of poetry translated into English from any European language and published during 1985 or 1986. Award: £500. Closing date: November 28. Organised by The Poetry Society in association with the British Council. Tel: 01 373 7861.

Women Workers Pay Low Pay Unit posters aimed at women workers; one on equal pay for work of equal value, and the other on the wages council before the passing of the wages bill. Available from LPU, 9 Upper Berkeley St, London W1H 8BY. Tel: 01 262 7278/9.

Promoting Union Aid War on Want has established a special project to promote payroll deductions schemes to trade unions. The deductions would be donated to charities. Contact War on Want, Three Castles House, 1 London Bridge St, London SE1 9SG. Tel: 01 403 2266 ext. 219.

Left Unlimited need volunteers and helpers to get involved in all aspects of the event. Tel: 01 251 4406 x 139.

Marxism Today is expanding its office merchandising and design team. This expansion requires volunteer staff. Expenses will be paid and volunteers will play a full and active part in every aspect of the magazine. Phone or write to: Business Manager, Jane Critchley, 16 St John St, London EC1. Tel: 01 608 0265. We would like to thank Laurence Budge, Michael Butler and Miriam Roston for their help on the September issue.

Any *Marxism Today* readers interested in helping to organise a *Marxism Today* event in the Swansea or Wrexham area please contact Alan Lane, 4 Tudor St, Cardiff. Tel: 0222 25111.

PUBLICATIONS

Profiting from Apartheid shows the extent of UK business involvement in South Africa. Also indicates what action can be taken by British trade unionists to end apartheid. Available from LRD, 78 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1. Price: £1.25.

Housing: The Case for Investment records that total investment in housing by both the public and private sectors is 10% less now than 10 years ago. It puts forward a 3-point plan to meet the demand for housing. Available from Shelter, 157 Waterloo Rd, London SE1 8XF. Price: £1.

The Writing on the Wall Public Capital Concerns. Information pack on the lack of capital investment in Britain's infrastructure. Available from Local Government Information Unit, 1-5 Bath St, London EC1V 9QQ. £2.50.

Fires Issue 2. Articles: Artists against Apartheid and an interview with Ruben Blades. Available from Fires, 3 Bodney Rd, London E8. £1.25.

Who Cares? is a health magazine published by Merseyside Communist party health group. Issue includes articles on the BMA's report on alternative medicine, a green view of health, an interview with Sheila Abdullah and lots more. Details from *Who Cares, 24 Hardman St, Liverpool* 1. Price 70p (inc. p&p) Subscriptions (4 issues) £2.50.

VIDEOS

Hot News outlines the benefits of combined heat and power as safe, clean and efficient energy technologies for this country. Available from The Northern Film and Television Archive, 36 Bottle Bank, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE8 2AR. Tel: 091 477 3601. Background and speakers notes also provided.

Northern Newsreel is a regular magazine format video bulletin produced with and for the broader labour movement. September's bulletin includes stories on the Fowler Review, Asian women, training camps for the unemployed and the Royal Family. Available from Northern Newsreel, 36 Bottle Bank, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 2AR. Tel: 091 477 3604.

EVENTS

International Evening of Solidarity Entertainment with groups from Chile, Ireland and Iran. Bar and food. Sept 6. 7-12pm. Ruskin House, Coombe Rd, Croydon. Organised by Croydon Communist party. All proceeds to the ANC.

Chile Events Outdoor festival with music, food, stalls and videos, Sept 7, 11am-6pm, Red Lion Square. 'Chile Today' – an educational and discussion event with an all-party panel of MPs. Workshops, videos, Chilean and British music, Sept 13, 11.30-9pm. Bloomsbury Baptist Centre. Latin Quarter & Incantation in concert for Chile, Sept 18, Town & Country Club, Kentish Town, London. Details from Chile Solidarity Campaign: 01 272 4298.

Croydon International Peace Festival to mark UN Peace Year. Theatre, music, videos, inflatables, food and bar. Sept 13, Croydon church halls.

Left Unlimited A weekend of the best in politics, culture and entertainment. Major national and international speakers. Oct 31-Nov 2, City University, London. Organised by *Marxism Today*. Details: 01 251 4406 x 139.

Spanish Civil War 50th anniversary display of posters, uniforms, photographs, documents, insignia and personal momentos relating to the war. Until Feb 1 1987 at Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Rd, London SE1.

Mandela 10km Road Run Oct 26, 12 noon, Finsbury Pk, London. A *Marxism Today* event in association with Anti-Apartheid. Application forms from *Marxism Today*, 16 St John St. London EC1. Tel: 01 251 4406. Please enclose sae.

Crisis in State Education Brian Simon plus others. Oct 8, 7.30pm, Imperial College, Exhibition Road, London, SW7. Organised by Kensington & Chelsea *Marxism Today* readers group. Details: 01 229 7456 or 01 244 9831.

Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance Stop the Hinkey expansion plan. Demonstration outside Welsh Office, Cardiff, 12.30, Saturday Sept 13.

Left Unlimited in Waltham Forest. Saturday October 18. Discussion and entertainment. Workshops on: 'racism in the labour movement'; 'deportations and the immigration laws' and 'racism and the police'. Evening theatre and music. Admission £1 (50p unwaged). Details 01 556 5995.

Entries for the October Update should be sent to the office by September 5. For information: tel Diane Dixon on 01-965 7482 (evenings) or 608 0265 (day). Please try to ensure you state how accessible the venue is for people with disabilities.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Martin Kettle is a leader writer for *The Guardian*.
Philip O'Brien lectures at the Institute for Latin American Studies, Glasgow University.
George Joffe is a consultant editor for the Middle East and North Africa at The Economist Publications.
Sarah Boseley is *The Guardian's* education correspondent.
Hariet Gaze is the news editor for *Nursing Times*.
Andrew Gamble is Professor of Politics at Sheffield University and the author of *Britain in Decline*.
John Edmonds is general secretary of the General Municipal Boilermakers & Allied Trades Union.
Beatrix Campbell is the author of *Wigan Pier Revisited*, a member of the Communist party and of *Marxism Today's* editorial board.
Charles Leadbeater is on the labour staff of *The Financial Times*.
Bob Rowthorn is a member of *Marxism Today's* editorial board and Reader in Economics at Cambridge University.
Grace Nichols is the author of *Whole Of A Morning Sky*.
Fay Weldon is a novelist. Her latest book is *The Shrapnel Academy*.
Paul Bew is Reader in Politics at Queens University, Belfast, and is the author of *Conflict and Conciliation in Irish Nationalism*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press.
Henry Patterson teaches politics at Ulster University and is co-author of *The British State and the Ulster Crisis*.
For **Viewpoint** contributors see p.46.
Eugene McLaughlin teaches at the University of Hong Kong.
Steve Readhead teaches at Manchester Polytechnic and is the author of *The Last Football Book*.
Brian McNair is a researcher in mass media at Glasgow University.
Jim Hawkins is a playwright who also runs a software development company.
Olivia O'Leary is a broacaster.
Scarlett McGuire is the author of *Kim's Story* just published by Harrap.
Cynthia Cockburn is the author of *Machinery of Dominance, Women Men and Technical Know-How*. She is currently doing research on young women and YTS.
Rosalind Brunt lectures in communications and women's studies at Sheffield Polytchnic and is a member of *Marxism Today's* editorial board.
Donald Macintyre labour editor on *The Independent* when it is launched this October.

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CLOSE • UP
ON

Mick McGahey

photo: Camera Press

Donald MacIntyre

Mick McGahey leaves the TUC general council this month having finally emerged as a focus for opposition, albeit still muted, to Arthur Scargill within the NUM.

When Peter Heathfield was elected general secretary in February 1984, it was widely assumed that he would use the constitutional authority invested in the job to assert himself as a counterweight to Scargill.

In the early stages of the 1984-5 miners' strike it was McGahey who thundered that the right wing suffered from 'ballotitis' and that the union would not be 'constitutionalised' out of taking action, while Heathfield was thought to harbour doubts about the wisdom of a strike that might close more pits than it could save.

Yet two years later it is McGahey, the Communist vice president of the NUM, and not Heathfield, who is cutting a distinctive figure in the NUM Left.

McGahey has still not broken openly with 'that young man', as he has referred to Scargill for years. But this year's NUM conference in Tenby marked a turning point. McGahey made two significant interventions. The first was on Nottinghamshire in which he warned against putting obstacles in the way of reuniting the NUM. The second, seemingly trivial but with wider implications, was over the role of the press, once again ritually attacked by Scargill.

McGahey gently reminded his audience that one of the conference's purposes was to address a wider audience and that the media were the vehicle for that message. Within the executive he and Eric Clarke, the Scottish miners' secretary, argued and voted against the arbitrary banning of Tom Condon, the industrial editor of Eddie Shah's *Today*.

McGahey is entitled to believe that he has handsomely paid his debts of loyalty to the NUM president. Prevented from seeking the top job by the then president Joe Gormley's procedural manouevre in the late 70s, which prevented officials over 55 from running, McGahey helped to mobilise the Left in support of the Yorkshire president's campaign in 1981. And his steadfast refusal to criticise his two colleagues in the 'Troika' (his word) at the top of the NUM must at times have cost him dear.

For there were signs below the surface during the strike that McGahey was less than wholly happy with its conduct. Privately – and still without criticising the NUM president – McGahey let it be known that he would prefer more emphasis on propaganda which stressed coal as a national asset. The lobby of parliament, proposed as a welcome distraction from mass picketing and designed to raise the wider energy issues, was McGahey's idea.

McGahey's liking for the broadly-based political campaign was illustrated by the success of the coalitions – including politicians and church figures – which the Scottish NUM assembled in support of sacked miners and the Scottish steel industry, the latter of which campaigns was contemptuously dismissed by Scargill at Tenby.

Nor did Scargill and Heathfield's distaste for involving the TUC find favour with the vice president. Indeed, it was McGahey who was forced to telephone his two colleagues in Sheffield on the eve of the 1984 TUC congress and insist that they travelled to Brighton to meet Len Murray and other senior TUC leaders for the first time since the beginning of the strike.

Both these issues, the failure to make the wider case for coal and to involve the TUC more deeply from the start of the dispute, were raised in the now famous critique by Peter Carter, the Communist party's industrial organiser, of the strike strategy. It was inconceivable that McGahey, as the most senior Communist in the NUM, was not consulted on some of the ideas in the Carter paper.

But the Carter critique went further; it questioned the mass picketing strategy and most explosively of all, it argued that the failure to hold a ballot had been central to the defeat of the strike.

When George Bolton, Communist party chairperson, suggested as much publicly in a post-strike *Marxism Today* seminar, he was bitterly attacked by both Heathfield and Scargill on the grounds that he had been a willing party to the decision by the Left not to pursue a ballot. That was true; neither McGahey nor Bolton had questioned the strategy at the time. McGahey, undaunted, rose to Bolton's defence at the Scottish miners' conference in June of last year.

He had not believed in a ballot at the time, he frankly admitted, but the failure to hold one had caused problems. Moreover, a ballot might have been won, he suggested, and in that case Notts might well have come out.

As recently as this summer Norman Stone, the eminent historian, recently described McGahey as a typical 'red Clydesider'. In fact, of course, his background is a different one. The son of a founder member of the Communist party, McGahey grew up in Shotts before the family was forced to move to Cambuslang when McGahey's father lost his job in the Lanarkshire coalfield after the 1926 strike.

It is astonishing, too, to leaf through newspaper cuttings describing him as a cold man incapable of small talk: widely read, courteous to colleagues across the whole political spectrum, a devoted husband, father and grandfather, he has an endless fund of excellent trade union and political anecdotes.

He is an avid newspaper reader with a critical interest in journalism and journalists. His most self-destructive traits are going to bed too late if the company is good, and a heavy smoking habit. Yet for a man who was beaten up by unknown attackers towards the end of the miners' strike, and who has had indifferent health for several years, he is still displaying a good deal of energy.

McGahey's Communist party membership has always been central to his union activities, and he has played a significant and sometimes critical role in recent debates about the future of the party. When asked what he would do when he retired from the NUM leadership, McGahey is reported to have said that he would be seeking a safe Communist seat in Scotland.

No doubt the split within the Communist party, a member of whose executive he has been for over 20 years, has sharpened his differences with Scargill, who has continued to side with the *Morning Star* faction. But it is McGahey, the lifelong Communist, rather than Scargill, the Labour party member, who is emerging as the voice for unity within the NUM, and with the Labour leadership.

The Carter critique, along with heavy input from South Wales NUM activists, helped to inform Kinnock's electrifying attack on the NUM president during last year's Labour party conference. McGahey remained silent at the time, but after a meeting with Kinnock on the eve of this year's Scottish Labour conference, McGahey went out of his way to declare he had no dispute with the Labour leader.

It is unlikely that McGahey will openly condemn Scargill for his continuing emphasis on industrial confrontation and his bitter attacks on Notts miners as Spencerites before or after he steps down as vice president in July; though there are many within the NUM and the Labour party who would like him to do so. But it is the wider political struggle to defeat Thatcherism, rather than the ideological purism of Scargill and his supporters, which is commanding the formidable McGahey loyalties now.

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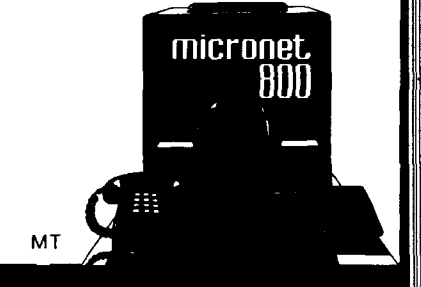

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